

**ACCULTURATION AND TRANSFORMATION AMONG FEMALE
IMMIGRANT MILITARY SPOUSES IN AN ESL LEARNING
PROGRAM AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

A Dissertation

by

PATRICIA DARNELL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2012

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

Acculturation and Transformation Among Female Immigrant Military Spouses in an
ESL Learning Program at a Community College

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ABSTRACT

Acculturation and Transformation Among Female Immigrant Military Spouses in an
ESL Learning Program at a Community College. (May 2012)

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This study was designed to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to understand the personal and structural forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

Using a qualitative design with the basic interpretive paradigm, data collection consisted of face-to-face interviews with 14 immigrant military wives from 10 differing countries who were either enrolled or had been enrolled in a community college ESL program. The site chosen served a multicultural population of military spouses who enrolled in educational programs that offered English language development. The nearest ESL program, located at a community college near the military base, became an information-rich site for the study.

The findings from the study highlighted the role of English language as an essential element to adjustment into the society of the United States for military immigrant wives, leading to acculturation and subsequently personal transformation. The data revealed both external and internal forces that influenced the acculturation process. External (structural) forces included community, workforce, the military, and an educational institution. The secondary forces included racial discrimination, cultural differences, and social networks within the community. Internal forces included love and care and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was manifested through their persistence, patience, and resilience.

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my grandchildren with the hope that they will also believe in education and its possibilities and always follow their dreams. Education is a gift that remains forever.

To those who wish to further their education, I am proof that it is never too late to begin a new chapter in life. Dreams do come true.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Overview

Throughout history, “people have constantly voluntarily migrated from Africa to Asia, Europe, America and Australia” (Brendel, 2008, p. 1). With the advent of telecommunications, the wealth of the rich nations has been brought “into the consciousness of the poor ones” (Heer, 1996, p. 7). As a result, many immigrants have departed their home countries in search of freedoms and economic opportunities thought to be obtainable in a new land. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2006), numerous immigrants left their homes to break away from restrictions that limited their lives and opportunities such as famine, drought, armed conflicts, and oppressive regimes. Some immigrants sought freedom from persecution and civil unrest “which frequently erupt[ed] into bloody conflict between differing ethnic groups or simply between haves and have-nots” (Heer, 1996, p. 7).

For many, “people wish to emigrate due to the visions of America as ‘the land of milk and honey’ where opportunities for upward mobility are endless and because of their familiarity with American cultural knowledge and society” (Reyes, 2006, p. 7). Many immigrants believed that coming to the United States ensured them relatively safe and secure borders and the freedom to engage in commerce (Barr, Jefferys, & Monger, 2007; U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service, 2007). Whether these immigrants arrived as labor migrants, refugees, entrepreneurs, spouses of military personnel, or professionals,

This dissertation follows the style of *Adult Education Quarterly*.

they voluntarily came to fulfill their aspirations and expectations for a better life (Heer, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2006).

In order to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills necessary for managing the requisites of their new culture, many immigrants choose to acculturate into the new society by adapting to the local diet, climate, housing, styles of interaction, norms and values, and the English language (Berry, 1997; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). Similarly, many seek that improved life through involvement with various labor markets, educational institutions, or community programs.

Today, the immigrant population is vastly different from the first White European colonists who migrated to and colonized the United States during the 16th through the 19th centuries. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2006), four specific waves of immigration opened the door to racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity that ultimately changed and continues to modify the fabric and faces of those living in the United States. The First Wave occurred during the American Colonial times, from about 1700 through 1783, with the majority of immigrants arriving from North and Western Europe, which encompassed England, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Wales, Ireland, and Germany (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The Second Wave, from around 1820 through 1870, included immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, specifically more Irish and Germans (Ellis Island Foundation, 2011). From about 1881 through the mid-1920s, the Third Wave of immigration occurred, representing Eastern and Southern Europe, which comprised Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Austro-Hungary, Russia, and parts of Asia, specifically China, while the Fourth Wave included from about 1930 to the present

(Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). During this wave, the countries of origin shifted to Central and South America, Africa, and the Pacific Rim, with only a small percentage from Europe (Foner & Alba, 2006).

Many individuals today continue to migrate for enhanced opportunities and join the labor force, enlist in the United States military, or take advantage of the available educational programs. Other foreign-born individuals marry military members and take up residence in the United States. As a result, many newcomers who do not have English as their first language continue to face challenges not only in adapting to and utilizing the English language but in understanding the nuances of social structure, law, politics, religion, art, and technology within the culture of the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). These challenges compelled the community to develop programs designed to assist the immigrants in their English language acquisition and movement toward acculturation. The military immigrant spouse is one group of individuals who are faced with the challenges of acculturating to the new country.

Background of the Problem

As a result of the United States military forces that have established bases in many foreign lands for battle and defense, the military has assisted in modifying the racial and ethnic landscape (Lee & Bean, 2004) through international, hybrid marriages that occur across racial, cultural, national, or religious divides (Reyes, 2006). For example, of the 16 million military men and civilian workers abroad during World War II, the majority of them were single men between the ages of 18 to 25, which made them eligible, sought after bachelors (Lade, 2005) and produced many marriages. According

to Wilt (2005), the women who married men from the United States, commonly labeled war brides, originated from over 50 countries with approximately 150,000 to 200,000 European women marrying these military men between 1944 and 1950. Lade (2005) observed that “there have been war brides since there have been wars, but never has there been a matrimonial exodus equal to what was seen in the years immediately after World War II” (p. 1). In addition, between 50,000 to 100,000 couples were married in the Far East during World War II and resulted in the relocation of a large number of immigrants into the United States when the military members received orders to return home. Many of the foreign nationals who married military members and migrated to the United States had to negotiate not only in an unfamiliar country, state, and city, but they had to adjust to mainstream society by learning a new language and culture as well as adjusting to the challenges of military life. For example, Johanna and Celia “immigrated as military wives. Both had very difficult adjustments upon immigrating to the United States, as they felt very isolated on the military bases to which they moved. In addition, in both cases there were fairly strong cultural differences between them and their husbands, which made the transition that much more difficult” (Clifford, Pearce, & Tandon, 2005, p. 3).

Several factors clarify the changing patterns of female migration to the United States. Although some literature tends to negatively portray the motives for immigration, there are many positive examples why women leave their birthplaces and begin life in a new country. For instance, Pearce (2006) stated that some “women have found greater access to legal safeguards and employment opportunities in the United States than in

countries with hiring and educational policies that are openly discriminatory against women” (p. 6). In addition, armed conflicts have displaced women and contributed to their emigration. For example, “female refugees have fled civil wars in the former Yugoslavia and African nations such as Rwanda, Somalia, and Liberia” (Pearce, 2006, p. 6) as did many young women who lived in a war-torn environment during World War II (Wilt, 2005). Likewise, labor shortages in the medical profession prompted the United States government to recruit female workers from the Philippines and South Korea after World War II. Also, in some countries such as Sri Lanka and the Philippines, “governments have long encouraged women to emigrate and send remittances back home” (Pearce, 2006, p. 6) to assist the family (Enriquez, 2003) through cross-cultural marriages.

In addition, many American military men have been stereotyped as potentially good husbands because they could offer a comfortable life through their steady job, good medical benefits (Scholes, 1997), and possible educational and employment opportunities in the United States (Hong, 1982). For example, in 1978, “of the United States citizens who married Koreans, more than 90% were military personnel” (Hong, 1982, p. 22). Although some of these marriages were arrangements under false pretenses by traffickers to transport women into the United States (Hughes, Chon, & Ellerman, 2007), there were, however, many consensual marriages where couples maintained their vows, raised a family, and grew old together, respecting each other’s ethnic origin, customs, traditions, and religious beliefs while building a life together in the United States.

Nevertheless, immigrants face numerous challenges as they try to acculturate into the new country. Padilla and Perez (2003) suggested that this immigrant group is more likely to encounter three distinct challenges: (a) acculturation endeavors, (b) educational issues, and (c) employment concerns. Because construction of an ethnic identity is complex and includes multiple facets of one's life (Reyes, 2006), past educational, personal, and cultural experiences within their ethnicity may conflict with acculturation into United States society. Since many immigrants attempt to maintain "their own identity while adapting socially to the majority culture" (Tong, 2000, p. 1) as they build a bicultural identity, they may feel separated by cultural and linguistic challenges from both their native and host cultures. This, in turn, may present challenges that affect their willingness and ability to acculturate and utilize the English language as a vehicle to negotiate through their new country.

Immigrant Challenges

Upon arriving in the United States, a number of immigrants faced significant challenges. Acculturation endeavors, educational issues, and employment concerns as well as ethno-cultural identity conflict, marginalization, discrimination, feelings of isolation, and English language difficulties due to their varied ethnic composition (Ward, 2008) often resulted from the differences between life in their previous and present countries. Also, according to Ward (2008), immigrants felt challenged and even isolated from their host society due to their lack of knowledge or understanding of the culture and, especially, of the English language.

Turula (as cited Padilla & Perez, 2003) warned that immigrants often believe they are judged as they endeavor to incorporate into mainstream culture that sometimes has led to feelings of isolation and separation between them, the native-born, and others who have already acclimated and acculturated to the new country. McClenney (2004) confirmed that numerous immigrants hold the expectation that educational institutions and community programs will support and assist them with their acculturation and cultural maintenance.

Acculturation Issues

A significant challenge for immigrants is acculturation. Acculturation not only relates to language acquisition such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English but also includes the acquisition of the characteristics of the United States culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Since the majority of today's immigrants are speakers of languages other than English, they face issues that the prior waves of immigrants from countries around the world who studied and spoke English did not encounter.

Gollnick and Chinn (1998) specified that both social and economic needs are served through the acquisition of English language skills. Without linguistic competence, movement into mainstream society becomes more challenging and “effectively forecloses the non-English speakers or limited-English speakers out of many job markets” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 244). In addition, immigrants may feel a sense of deprivation or isolation when participation within the life of the larger community is limited. To “get an education, find a job, obtain access to health care or social services, and apply for citizenship” (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, p. 194) are some objectives that

may be hampered by inadequate English language competencies. In fact, by acquiring English language skills through available educational programs, immigrant English language learners will be more likely to advocate for themselves in both formal and non-formal settings for personal, educational, and career advancement as well as to become more confident in a variety of social situations.

Another difficulty many immigrants face is the acquisition of the characteristics and the expected behaviors of a given culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998) directed by a society's mores and norms that guide not only language use but the behavior, emotions, and thinking of that culture. For example, cultural images within the United States are frequently misunderstood. Gollnick and Chinn (1998) stated that the significance of holidays, symbols, and historical points of interest as well as the uses of slang, telephone protocols, and the avoidance of taboo topics have often been misinterpreted or misconstrued by immigrants when acclimating to their new home, neighborhoods, work environments, and the society at large and has created difficulties with interpersonal interaction and acculturation.

“Coming to a new country, an immigrant woman has little to no resources available and may be completely dependent on her husband” (Reyes, 2006, p. 10). To determine her best method for transition into the culture of the United States independent of her spouse, many immigrant women rely on community facilities, churches, or local educational institutions for English language learning and acculturation assistance (Seidman, 1995). For immigrant women who marry U.S. servicemen, ESL community college programs located on or adjacent to military installations offer acculturation and

English language acquisition assistance at nominal costs. Although these programs are available, convenient, and geographically accessible, the immigrant adult learner may face external or internal rewards or challenges within the family unit or the academic environment that may influence their attrition or retention (Bean, 1980; Mannan, 2007; Tinto, 2000, 2002c).

Educational Issues

Many immigrant learners operate under the perception that a community college is the beginning point for their acculturation (Seidman, 1995) and an entry point to their new culture (Ng, 2006). Seidman (1995) also noted that the community college serves as the ideal starting place for immigrants to learn standardized English, to redevelop or update skills brought from their home countries, or to develop technical skills which that enable them to acquire jobs within the United States. In fact, Bailey (2012) espoused that “for many, community colleges are the gateway for access to higher education” (p. 1). The majority of students, especially immigrants, currently attending post-secondary institutions perceive that community colleges serve as the lifeline to connect them to their new communities of residence.

Although programs exist within the community to assist the immigrant, foreign-born spouse with relocation to the receiving community (Chopp, 1996), immigrants often rely on the community college to create and provide a safe entry point (Ng, 2006) for bridging one culture into another. As a matter of fact, Crandall and Sheppard (2004) explained that “at least 15 million adults would benefit from ESL instruction, a number that far exceeds the capacity of adult ESL programs” (p. 7). According to Chopp (1996),

many immigrants trust that education will empower them because educational programs within the United States are known to celebrate diversity, host students from many different countries, and offer guidance as well as choices to make their acculturation transition more fluid. Consequently, community colleges have been challenged to address and support the needs of this burgeoning, changing influx of immigrant, nontraditional, adult women college students who arrive with varying levels of literacy and the desire to acculturate into their new society through ESL instruction (Brod, 1995).

As a result of the mobility inherent within the military, a challenge for these immigrants, then, is not only to enroll in the supportive climate of the available educational programs but to persist there until their goals are met or they feel comfortable enough to navigate unaided through the culture of the United States and locate gainful employment.

Employment Concerns

The third challenge for many immigrants is locating gainful employment together with opportunities for growth through additional training and advancement. Some immigrants enter and readily adapt to the culture within the United States and find successful employment, but others face the need to develop a plan for integration into the workforce. Fitzgerald (1995) posited that the English language competence of many ESL learners may only be suitable for entry-level employment but that their English literacy skills would certainly improve with increasing amounts of ESL instruction and practice in the workplace.

Many immigrants moving to the United States have recognized their limited choices upon arriving as well as the lack of opportunities in their home countries (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Many immigrants fully believe they will be afforded possibilities to create their own paths, earn their own money, and build their futures without political, religious, or racial prejudices within the United States (Merage Foundation for the American Dream [Merage Foundation], 2007). The “American Dream” for them is unbridled hope where aspirations have the potential to become realities.

Yet, acculturation into the workforce may involve a substantial price. For instance, “continuous and firsthand contacts with the dominant group usually result in subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 12). Also, Gollnick and Chinn (1998) stated that many immigrants believe that to share the American dream, they may have to forego their native languages and ethnic traditions or conceal them at work in order to interact within the dominant group. Since there is no guarantee that their English language and cultural adaptation challenges and sacrifices will be acknowledged by the dominant group within the workplace, it is important to recognize that their relocation across cultures was not only voluntary but was a personal choice (Ward, 2008). As a result of their desire to acculturate and fit into the workforce, these immigrants may feel the need for English language instruction. Consequently, they tend to rely on available English language programs within community colleges who serve as “cultural brokers” (Pipher, 2002, p. 88) and provide a comfortable, engaging learning environment that retains them in the programs until their English language goals have been met. By providing assistance with

English language acquisition, integration into the academic community would encourage their retention (Tinto, 2002b) within the program that would affect not only acculturation into the educational institution, but the community and the workforce as well.

Immigrants face significant challenges when moving into mainstream society within the United States that include acculturation endeavors, educational issues, and employment concerns. Whether they utilize educational institutions to assist them in enhancing their English skills, to acquire literacy, or to update their workplace proficiencies, immigrants, especially those affiliated with the United States military, frequently encounter difficulties with the external as well as internal forces that test their determination to become acculturated into society within the United States.

Problem Statement

Immigrant spouses of United States military members and their families consistently rotate into communities as dictated by military manpower requirements on the various installations. Over the past several years, communities adjacent to military installations have begun examining the influx of immigrants into their cities and the changes needed to transition these new members into their neighborhoods. The National Literacy Act of 1990 has continued to drive community as well as educational programs to accommodate the immigrant military spouses who desire socio-cultural adaptation required when relocating across cultures (Ward, 2008). As the numbers of immigrants continue to rise, literacy issues become more significant. Local educational institutions, specifically community colleges, are tasked with providing the needed knowledge and

skills necessary to orient new members into the community (Mikulecky, 1990) as well as assist military spouses in acculturating to their new home and the job market.

Of those immigrants, especially those who affiliate with the military, many desire English language instruction. Because community colleges are set in accessible locations, they service incoming immigrants by providing English language acquisition and acculturation assistance and often become an immigrant's first stop to support her in becoming culturally competent in her new country, community, and in the community college setting (Seidman, 1995, Ward, 2008). The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL) (2001) reported that attending English language classes offers an ideal transition for immigrants into the receiving culture. These institutions, then, implement programs to respond to meeting the demands and satisfying the English language acquisition needs of these military-related immigrants who frequently seek economic independence and upward mobility (Hasman, 2000) from an affiliation with the United States military.

The current body of research mainly addresses the challenges of adult international students or those within the K-12 levels (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003). Pascarella (1999) added that over 2,600 studies were conducted on post-secondary students, but the research has been skewed toward four-year colleges and universities. As a result, immigrant military spouses who attend a community college have been largely under-represented in these studies. Likewise, the predominant focus has been on literacy and English language learning from the perspective of teaching and student learning strategies (McKeachie, 2002) but does not address acculturation concerns,

academic issues relevant to speakers of languages other than English, or assist immigrants in becoming more employable. These issues have become prevalent on community college campuses where immigrants prepare for employment by expanding their workplace and English language skills. Given the limitations of the existing literature, a need remains for additional research concerning military-related immigrants in higher education on community college campuses. Not only does this distinctive group face acculturation challenges (Berry, 1998, 2001), but they require support systems (Bandura, 1994) since they belong to a highly mobile military community that makes demands on their time and energies, thus requiring them to communicate in a language other than that of their home country.

This research focused on the essence of the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant military spouses who are or have been enrolled in an ESL program on a community college campus adjacent to a large military base within the United States. In this study, I utilized a basic interpretive approach to examine the transitions and acculturation experiences as military spouses in the United States.

This chapter addresses (a) the background, (b) the problem statement, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) the research questions, (e) the conceptual framework, (f) the significance of the study, (g) the operational definitions, (h) the limitations of this study, (i) a summary, and (j) the contents of the study.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community

college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation. For purposes of this study, acculturation denotes an immigrant's understanding and acceptance of the standards and practices of the gaining culture as she learns to function within the society of the United States.

Since a community college setting and its students represent "a very rich and complex social structure that cannot readily be studied holistically by statistical means alone" (Bloland, 1992, p. 5), this research presented "the social world, and perspectives on that world, in terms of the concepts, behaviors, perceptions and accounts of the people who inhabit it" (Ritchie, 1998, p. 1). The research questions explored those aspects from the perspective of the immigrant military wife.

Research Questions

This research explored the acculturation experiences of immigrant military wives on a public community college campus as related to their external and internal challenges within the ESL program. Despite individual motivation, persistence, and self-efficacy, specific external factors may have affected their resiliency and contributed to a drop in their retention. Looking at these factors better illuminated why some students persist and others become part of the attrition statistic.

This research project explored and analyzed the perceptions and experiences of the immigrant military spouse through these following questions:

1. What does it mean to be an immigrant military spouse who is a speaker of a language other than English within the United States?
2. How do external and internal factors influence or impede the acculturation of immigrant military spouses into the wider society of the military and the community?
3. How do ESL programs at the community college level influence the acculturation of immigrant military spouses?
4. What external or internal factors do immigrant military spouses perceive as influencing or facilitating their retention within an ESL program in a community college setting?

Conceptual Framework

Merriam and Simpson (2000) suggested that research questions guide the conceptual framework. In this case, four interview questions reflected the purpose of this study: to explore the acculturation experiences of immigrant military wives on a public community college campus related to their external and internal challenges while enrolled in an ESL program.

Because the study followed the basic interpretive approach within the qualitative paradigm, it focused specifically on the personal experiences of the immigrant military spouses. The conceptual framework chosen for this study was comprised of three models: Berry's (1997, 1998, 2001) Acculturation Theory, Bandura's (1995, 1997) Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's (2003, 2004) Student Retention Theory.

Berry's (1997, 1998, 2001) Acculturation Theory posited that acculturation is a sociocultural adaptation that clarified how an immigrant manages life within a new culture while maintaining a sense of cultural identity. Bandura's (1995, 1997) Social Learning Theory explained self-efficacy, which includes not only the ability to succeed in various situations but involves learning the effects of social persuasion and support in encouraging and regulating behaviors, as crucial to social learning theory. Furthermore, Tinto's (2003, 2004) Student Retention Theory involved attrition and retention within postsecondary institutions. He concluded that the development of educational communities facilitated feelings of affiliation through the development of a "safe haven in a sea of unfamiliar peers" (Tinto, 2002a, p. 5), which often stimulates retention. These theories will be further examined in Chapter II. Together these models helped frame this study and its purpose of identifying the experiences of these individuals as they attempted to acculturate into life within the United States. As a result, this study held significance for theory, policy, and practice that will be discussed in detail within this chapter.

Significance for Theory

For several decades, research focused on the traditional college student who had time and money to attend postsecondary classes at major universities on a full-time basis (Pascarella, 1999). However, because community colleges provide the ideal starting point for nontraditional immigrant students who want to learn a skill or advance their English language competencies (Seidman, 1995), the number of immigrants enrolling has continued to rise as a result of open-entry opportunities. Demands on the colleges

and their employees have continually increased to provide the programs and services expected by the immigrant students. In response, the community college has sought to support these students who expressed the need to redevelop or update their English language and technical skills in order to assist them in acquiring or maintaining employment, meeting the English language requirement for citizenship, and acculturating into society within the United States (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). This study will assist in advancing the body of research about the acculturation into mainstream society of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college because continual immigration and the increasing rates of hybrid marriages to military members persist to alter the structure of the fabric of America, the military, the community, and the educational institutions (Reyes, 2006) involved.

There is a paucity of research that incorporates acculturation theory, social learning theory, and retention theory within the context of immigrant learners in English language classes; however, few empirical studies could be found that have specifically addressed immigrant military spouses. Therefore, this study will contribute to the literature by exploring the external and internal forces that facilitate or hinder the immigrant military spouses' ability to acculturate into the United States and highlight the potential for ESL programs to assist in the transition.

Significance for Policy

Although several studies have explored the immigrant student within postsecondary educational institutions, none has included the perspective of the

immigrant military spouse in policy development. The results of this research will assist administrators and faculty who practice within community colleges in the United States to implement policies that better serve immigrant spouses in available and future English language acquisition programs. An additional benefit from this study may be a coordination of and development of innovative partnerships between the campus, the military, and the community as well as the creation of policies that ensure movement from initial enrollment to program completion.

Significance for Practice

According to McClenney (2004), “community colleges have inarguably the toughest job in American higher education” (p. 11). Educational professionals often struggle in their attempts to meet the needs of this under-represented population of ethnically and linguistically diverse immigrant military wife population. Therefore, educational institutions are not only challenged but obligated to provide innovative, productive programs with quality student to faculty interaction in conjunction with available technological interventions to assist these military spouses in their English language acquisition as well as acculturation into society within the United States.

The results of this study will have significance for the community colleges who serve the military community and especially their immigrant spouses. The illumination of these needs will provide insight into the development of standards of training for educators, the establishment of pioneering English language programs, and increased retention rates for this specific population. In addition, by providing English language training and skill opportunities, the immigrant military spouses may recognize that

progression toward acculturation is more manageable by utilizing the cultural brokering provided within the community college environment.

Utilizing the models of Berry's (1997, 1998, 2001) Acculturation Theory, Bandura's (1995, 1997) Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's (2003, 2004) Student Retention Theory helped frame this study that examined the external and internal forces inherent within the transition of the immigrant military spouses into the culture of the United States.

Definition of Terms

The findings of this study are to be reviewed within the context of the following definitions of operational terminology.

Acculturation – An immigrant's acceptance of the standards and practices of the gaining culture while learning to function within a specific society (Gollnick & Chinn, 1994). Also, acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups come into continuous firsthand contact. The original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered yet remain distinct. Rudmin (2003) provided a catalogue of acculturation constructs.

Active Duty – Personnel who are currently employed by and serving in any branch of the U.S. military (National Defense Authorization Act, 2008).

Attrition – A reduction in the numbers of students enrolled in a community college due to a variety of external or internal reasons such as deployment, transfer, family problems, inopportune class offerings, etc. (Frias-Boson, 2000).

Community College – A two-year public, nonresidential college that strives to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse and changing student population and provides a safe entry point for an immigrant to bridge one culture into another (Ng, 2006).

Cultural Broker – Anyone who assists immigrants into a new culture (Pipher, 2002).

Deploy/Deployment – A time for troops to prepare to leave the area for purposes of military training or temporary duty (National Defense Authorization Act, 2008).

Discrimination – Negative treatment against a person or group without merit (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998).

ESL Students – English as a Second Language learners. These students do not claim English as their primary language and strive to read, write, and speak in English (Braine, 1996). The ESL immigrant learner was not born in the United States, does not have English as her first language, and is enrolled in a local community college ESL program.

Ethno-Cultural identity Conflict - Relations between the minority and the majority groups become strained if that minority in the past inflicted a trauma upon the majority group (Yagcioglu, 1996).

External Forces – Those positive or negative situations, forces, or events that occur outside one's control but may affect one's life. For example, racial discrimination, cultural differences, military life, and educational institutions are examples of forces that may influence one's behavior.

Hybrid Marriages – Also called interracial marriages or bicultural marriages, these are marriages that occur across racial, cultural, national, and religious divides (Reyes, 2006).

Identity Conflict – One's self-awareness and ethnic identity may conflict with the cultural norms of the receiving community (Shepard & Greene, 2001).

Immigrant – Non-citizens of the receiving culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2006). For example, a military spouse who was not born in the United States, emigrates from one nation to another to resettle, and resides on or near a United States military installation.

Internal Forces – Behaviors that are created inside oneself to respond to challenges and result in success or failure. Some examples of internal forces are: (a) self-efficacy, (b) persistence, (c) attitudes, (d) beliefs, and (e) core values. According to Bandura (1997), one's self-belief assists with exercising personal control over situations.

Isolation – A separation or segregation from others for a variety of reasons that may or may not be apparent and understood (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998).

Language Acquisition – A process used to acquire spoken and written language in English where the student works to learn, understand, discuss, and utilize the rules for standard English grammar (Krashen, 1981).

Marginalization – A feeling of isolation from mainstream society due to feelings of discrimination and/or perceived differences in language, culture, and educational experiences (Turula, 2002).

Nontraditional College Student – A student who requires unconventional scheduling to allow for personal responsibilities and obligations. These students tend to be more concerned with academic offerings and do not generally integrate into the social aspect of the educational institution (Bean & Metzner, 1985, 1989).

Norms – The unwritten and often unconscious rules that govern expected behavior in a particular social interaction within a specific culture (Shepard & Greene, 2001).

Persistence – A student's decision to continue toward an educational goal despite opposition or challenges. Perseverance, determination, and diligence may describe the immigrant student (Tinto, 1975).

Racism – An unsubstantiated belief that one's race is superior to another; this includes hatred or intolerance of other races (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998).

Resilience – A term used to describe adults who have overcome challenges, obstacles, and hardships through their personal strengths. "A resilient person believes he or she can make choices, can learn, can do something well" (Appelt, 2006, p. 1). A resilient person copes with high levels of ongoing disruptive challenge and changes to a new way of working and living when an old way is no longer possible (Siebert, 2005).

Retention – The ability of educational programs to maintain student enrollment and class attendance (Tinto, 1975).

Social Networking – Individuals who group together with others of like interests and common causes. Also called support groups (Vandesteeg, 2005).

Transformation – A personal change in one’s nature or character related to crossing cultures (Gabaccia, 1994) and second language socialization (Shi, 2006).

Voluntary Contact – A person who chooses to relocate across cultures (Ward, 2008).

War Brides – A wartime wife; a woman who meets and marries a serviceman during wartime, especially from another country (Lade, 2005).

Delimitations of This Study

This study was delimited to a community college program that provides English language learning to students who do not claim English as their first language. This restriction was imposed prior to the inception of the study to narrow the scope to a study of immigrant military wives who move to the United States and reside near a large military installation.

Summary

Immigrants with dreams and aspirations for a better life have come to the United States in waves, thus changing the character and composition of the culture. As a result, these immigrants no longer remain a nameless minority on community college campuses, in the community, in the military, or in the workforce as their numbers continue to increase.

With the advent of increased immigration and military marriages to foreign nationals, the face of the United States continues to change. The community colleges, the workforce, and the receiving communities must transform to meet the needs of these immigrant military spouses who leave their countries in search of freedoms, education, personal aspirations, and economic opportunities.

Although challenges exist in English language acquisition, acculturation, in employment, and within educational institutions, immigrants continue to arrive in the United States. As the color lines fade through racial and ethnic diversity (Lee & Bean, 2004), the fabric of the United States becomes strengthened. The rich tapestry of today's acculturated immigrant is a result of the belief that this ethnically diverse country is a beacon of hope and personal choices strengthened by opportunities and possibilities.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The United States is comprised of a culturally and linguistically diverse population because the number of immigrants has continued to rise due to changes in immigration policies over the last 100 years. Within the last 20 years alone, the population of English language learners has doubled (DiCerbo, 2006) and has changed the demographics of local communities, especially in areas situated near United States military installations. Due to the changes in immigration policy and the number of international marriages, the focus of many educational programs has shifted from the traditional to the immigrant student in areas such as English language development and workforce skills. The following topics reflected in this chapter include a background into the immigrant spouses of United States military members and English language acquisition within a community college with reference to Berry's Acculturation Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's Retention Theory. Also included is a set of artifact data in Appendix A.

According to Camarota (2005), about 35.2 million immigrants currently reside in the United States. Many of these immigrants arrived with minimal literacy levels, substandard education, inadequate English skills, and insufficient workforce skills. In order to work, they have to accept low-paying jobs, and a significant part of this group includes female immigrant military spouses. These immigrants marry military members and leave their countries for a variety of reasons, often to include increased opportunities

and freedoms. As the United States military continues to occupy and defend foreign lands, the number of marriages between military members and foreigners has been projected to continue. Since immigrants will continue to move to the United States to accompany their spouses, these women generally locate in communities adjacent to military bases. As a result, community colleges are charged to offer them programs that provide English language instruction, job skills training, literacy support, and oftentimes acculturation support.

A result of this immigration is a change in the fabric of the United States. An immigrant must communicate in English to connect the country, its culture, and people (Renshon, 2007); therefore, learning the English language and culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) has been a requirement to survive in the receiving society (Fitzgerald, 1995). As a result, according to Crandall and Sheppard (2004), community colleges frequently address, respond to, and provide programs to meet the needs of this burgeoning influx of linguistically and culturally diverse women who arrive with varying levels of English literacy as well as the desire to become acculturated into the society of the United States.

Literacy programs have driven community programs, especially at the community college level, to focus on language development skills. In particular, this act provided an accommodation for immigrant military spouses who desire an understanding of intercultural relationships as well as psychological and socio-cultural adaptations (Ward, 2008) required when relocating across cultures. The American Dream, which provides freedom through “expanded opportunity, increased security, and

guaranteed basic freedoms” (Merage Foundation, 2007, p. 2), has translated into choices enabling immigrants to build their lives in a country where individual possibilities exist. By becoming integrated into United States society, immigrants contribute not only to the economy but assist their families and communities with achieving basic freedoms, opportunities, and choices. Immigrants from over 50 countries and possessions have been willing to leave their home countries, which is a testimony to their desire to cling to their dream by a commitment to this new way of life (Merage Foundation, 2007). Specifically, immigrant spouses of United States military members face challenges as they acculturate into the society of the United States.

Immigrant Spouses of United States Military Members

Historically, the United States military, which has included the Army, Marines, Navy, and Air Force, has established bases in foreign countries for the purposes of defense or offense. These bases are located in various areas around the world including Europe, the Far East, Central and South America, and Africa. Recently, the Army has established bases in the Middle East, such as the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Because many bases are established in areas that are economically challenged, the local economy generally warmly receives the troops who spend money and support local businesses. As a result, military members frequently interact with the foreign nationals, and, occasionally, relationships and marriages result (Lade, 2005). Whether these marriages occur during war or peacetime efforts, when the military members return to United States they frequently petition to move their spouses with them.

During World War II, war brides originated in 50 countries with about 75% of them reaching United States shores (Lade, 2005). Although there were no specific records kept about war brides, Lade (2005) estimated that about one million foreign women married United States military members before and after the war when the War Brides Act of 1945 opened the doors to immigration. Likewise, the repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Act in 1952 made travel into the United States easier for Japanese brides (Lade, 2005). Between 1942 and 1952, it is predicted that about 100,000 war brides were British, between 150,000 to 200,000 were from continental Europe, and about 16,000 were from Australia and New Zealand (Wilt, 2005). In addition, the military estimated that about “50,000 to 100,000 servicemen wed women from countries of the Far East. By 1950, 14,175 German brides of American servicemen had entered the United States” (Wilt, 2005, p. 1).

After the Vietnam War, there was also a mass movement of war brides into the United States. It has been estimated that about 8,040 Vietnamese war brides entered between 1947 and 1975 (Kim, 1977). If the trend continues, as military members return from the Middle East and other countries around the world, they will most likely introduce their immigrant wives to life in the United States to begin the English language and acculturation process.

Wilt (2005) posited that many young women who live in ravaged, war-torn countries accept the opportunity to leave their blighted environment for promising opportunities through marriage in the United States. Thus, the demand for husbands from the United States has continued. Some women opt for marriage as a vehicle out of

inhospitable conditions for the proverbial land of milk and honey (Hong, 1982; Reyes, 2006), plus the economic stability of the military member will provide daughters with funds to send to their families to help with the family debt (Enriquez, 2003; Scholes, 1997).

Kim and Yang (2004) reported that over the years, for example, many United States military bases and facilities existed in Korea. Within their ethnographic field work, they conducted from 35 to 56 in-depth interviews of Korean women married to American military men to determine the extent of the camp town images on their lives within the United States. In Korea, camp towns grew around bars, nightclubs, massage parlors, and houses of prostitution near base gates to service the military and other foreign visitors. These camps drew in women who “were lured by the appearance of freedom and material abundance” (Kim & Yang, 2004, p. 7) where opportunities for quick money were easy. Subsequently, the reputation still persists that U.S. military bases in Korea remain “an international hub for trafficking of women for prostitution and related forms of sexual exploitation” (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 902). This reputation has continued to follow Korean military brides to the United States and has contributed to some stigmatization within United States society. Kim and Yang (2004) determined that these women remain “haunted by the ever-present shadow of camp towns, the image of the prostitute and of victim conceived collectively among American and fellow Koreans” (p. 3).

Hong (1982) suggested that stereotyping women from foreign countries who marry United States service members has been unjust. Whether an economic crisis has

been the push factor (Enriquez, 2003) or whether a desire for travel, adventure, love, or a new experience was the impetus for a move, each international marriage deserved consideration. Whatever compelled women to leave their home countries for the United States, not every reason has been the same.

The Privacy Act (1974) has made it difficult to access the specific reasons for each marriage due to the parameters of confidentiality. As a result, since 1975 immigrants who have been legally admitted into the United States have had control about the records kept about them, prompting the military to refrain from asking personal questions. Soldiers marry within the area of their duty assignment, and permission to marry foreign spouses is granted after background checks are completed by various governmental agencies. Once married, the woman's status becomes an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) affair. Statistics have not differentiated between immigrant spouses of military members and others admitted into the United States. Between 2006 and 2008, over one million women entered and settled in the United States, and in 2009, almost 391,807 women from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America became naturalized United States citizens (Lee & Rytina, 2009). If statistics were available, a large number of immigrant naturalizations would likely result from a military movement out of the duties in international assignments.

Chopp (1996) reported that immigrant military spouses who move to the United States face acculturation challenges that include not only English language difficulties and culture shock but adaptation to the military way of life. Husbands who deploy and

are away from home for days, weeks, months, or years can impact the wives and children left behind. As an example, Johnson (2006) examined the stressful effects of deployments to war zones on military wives. Although these wives were not necessarily immigrants, the resulting commonality was that self-esteem issues became prevalent as wives assumed sole responsibility for the family unit. Segal and Segal (2004) noted that these separations not only involved financial hardship and logistical burdens to the immigrant spouse but often involved culture shock from an unfamiliar language and customs. A military wife, for example, may be “left behind to handle all of the stresses of taking care of a family, financial concerns, and deal with the feelings of hopelessness that can sometimes develop into depression and frustration” (Johnson, 2006, p. 13) when dealing with the mores and norms of society in the United States.

Although acculturation into society within the United States has been challenging for many, women with the personal traits of self-efficacy, resourcefulness, and persistence have helped them fare better than those who did not take the initiative and tended to remain isolated or fixated in groups with like ethnic identities. Although some immigrants remain at home isolated from society, some have turned to community and educational institutions for English language and acculturation assistance. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) (2001) reported that the opportunity to attend English language classes provides an ideal transition for immigrants into the new culture as well as assistance in English language acquisition.

Educational Institutions as a Venue for English Language Acquisition

To reduce the perceived stigma of illiterate immigrant, many immigrants have gravitated toward education with hopes that colleges, the military, and the community could unite to provide services to help them reach English language acquisition and acculturation, “the process of acquiring the characteristics of a given culture and generally becoming competent in its language” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 4), in order to gain identity and membership into the receiving community. For example, Moss (2006) explained that language competency is important for an immigrant, especially when contacting her child’s teacher, visiting a doctor’s office, or asking questions in the supermarket while Ponton, Derrick, and Carr (2005) emphasized the opportunity to explore new perspectives by acquiring English language skills.

Many community colleges have implemented English language assistance programs for the immigrants who migrate for opportunities not readily available in their home countries (Hasman, 2000). The immigrant population, according to Seidman (1995), continues to perceive that the community college is “the ideal starting place in a new country for learning English, redeveloping or updating skills brought from their home countries, or for developing technical skills which will enable them to acquire jobs in the United States” (p. 1). Likewise, positions with increased benefits, stability, and opportunities for advancement may begin with enrollment in community college programs.

Immigrant military spouses often enroll in local institutions because the convenient location allows them to continue their regular family and work lives while in

pursuit of their educational goals. Despite the pressures to succeed, these students generally maintain high hopes and expectations for successful English language acquisition and acculturation into life within the United States (Frias-Boson, 2000). Shank (2001), however, posited that English language acquisition and commitment to task may be affected by a student's lack of developmental readiness for language instruction. Heilman (2010) stated that many academic writing courses have been basically written for native-English speakers that make English language learning more inaccessible to immigrants. As a result, ESL students may begin at a lower level and proceed as specific skills are acquired. In addition, second language learning may be hindered by family responsibilities including the deployment of the spouse, the lack of personal study skills, financial distress, linguistic discovery challenges, socioeconomic status, gender, birth location, institutional barriers, educentrism, or the societal norms in the sending country (Yang, 2005). Shank (2001) indicated that researchers have advised that immigrants begin with the basic English 850 word list to make vocabulary more manageable for those who may have had their education as well as their personal life disrupted by war or conflict, marriage, or the relocation to the United States.

Kasper (2000) stated that many immigrants lack the ability to utilize available informational resources to solve problems and make decisions because they are often unaware of the available programs and services. For others, complicated "grammatical structures, vocabulary, and tense usage" (Swick, 2004, p. 4) inherent within the English language have often created confusion during the language learning process that may have directly affected an understanding and retention of the language. The acquisition of

a second language, according to Bonvillain (1997), is a relatively complex process due to the situational, social, and cultural aspects inherent in slang, dialects, phonology, syntax, morphology, and the denotative as well as connotative meanings of words and phrases. This has made it extremely difficult for a non-native English language learner to effectively communicate to everyone (Hasman, 2000) because no one specific dialect is spoken throughout the United States. Nevertheless, many immigrants perceive that English language acquisition is the key to unlocking the barriers to acculturation.

Tinto's (2002d) focus on retention has spurred additional researchers to investigate effective retention and decreased attrition. The retention of students within postsecondary institutions has not only been problematic but a costly issue, according to Swail (2004). Although enrollments have increased over the years, so have the attrition rates. Donovan (2001) indicated that today's students are products of changing demographics and generational shifts; therefore, what worked in the past is not an indication of what will work in the present or the future. As a result, low retention rates have affected not only the students but the institution and the society. Many barriers exist that hinder the progress of immigrant students toward English language acquisition and acculturation. Bailey (2006) identified several barriers that hinder retention and subsequently cause students to leave educational programs: situational, institutional, dispositional, demographic, and emotional relational barriers. These barriers, from a variety of external forces, create challenges that may tax the immigrant to the point that despite her levels of self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience, she finds them

overpowering and chooses to put her English language acquisition and acculturation objectives on hold.

Situational problems may stem from challenges, according to Swail (2004), such as employment or unemployment, lack of finances, childcare, transportation, health, literacy, war conditions, residing in a rural location, living in a non-literate environment, inadequate or unavailable Internet connections, time constraints, military deployments, or permanent change of stations. These problems may be impermanent but compel a student to lose sight of her goals and leave the educational program because the challenges appear insurmountable.

Institutional barriers include influences controlled by the institution such as the location of classes, scheduling conflicts, establishment of prerequisites, student placement, inauthentic materials, mono-cultural teachers, lack of choices, and inconsistent course and institutional requirements. Swail (2004) suggested that campuses focus on accessibility to include flexible scheduling, online courses, course rotation, faculty and student mentoring, and institutional monitoring and consistent assessment of student progress. For example, a specific challenge many ESL students face is the requirement that successful completion of a course is a prerequisite for other courses especially “when success or failure in the course is determined by an examination” (Braine, 1996, p. 91). These courses become problematic to students. In addition, the student may not be linguistically on par with the native speaking student (Spelleri, 2007) within some classes and reflects student placement issues and may contribute to attrition.

Dispositional barriers include the student's influences of experience that include levels of self-efficacy, persistence, resilience, and according to Pajares (2011), her attitude toward educational institutions. Bandura (1977) explained that a student is apt to remain within a program when "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193) is possible. If the student believes she is capable of success, there is a greater likelihood of a favorable outcome.

Researchers who have been evaluating personal motivations as a key to unlocking these dispositional barriers advise that there is never a guarantee of success. Bonvillain (1997) explained that understanding and using a new language is challenging and difficult to master for the immigrant student. "Language is enriched by the uses that people make of it. These uses, and the meanings transmitted, are situational, social, and cultural" (Bonvillain, 1997, p. 1) and often create misunderstandings and may serve as a deterrent to program completion. Specifically, cultural expectations form a significant part of communicative competence.

Demographic barriers relate specifically to age, gender, and cultural backgrounds. For instance, adapting to the norms of a community college in the United States may be challenging to an immigrant who enters the United States educational system with old world values. Also, coping with a learning or physical disability may contribute to insecurity and disconnectedness within a classroom.

The emotional relational barrier includes care and support, or a lack thereof, from the student's environment. These barriers include family, friends, teachers, staff members, neighbors, and community members and specifically relate to Tinto's (1997)

study where he examined how participation in collaborative learning through cohorts allow for building supportive networks. In addition, emotions often factor into language processing and hinder advancement from, for example, drama from births, deaths, gossip, or military deployments in a student's life that may cause students to lose focus and hinder learning. Kerka (2005) explained that "the focus here is on the creation of an organizational culture that understands persistence from the learner's point of view and the development of an environment that both acknowledges and respects the learner's multiple contexts and roles and offers a safe space for identifying and pursuing educational goals" (p. 3). When the student is able to focus and think about the course content for an uninterrupted time, the possibilities increase that she will remain in a program and continue moving toward her goals.

All instructional programs are not the same, have never been, and will probably never be because there is no overall governing body to direct the programs, especially within the English language program area. In fact, not all community colleges award credit to ESL students for their course work, which is an additional barrier to retention (Ignash, 1992, 1995). For example, some community colleges continue to use the truncated design for all ESL reading, writing, speaking, and listening classes; therefore, students must pay tuition, but there is no credit awarded for successful completion of the courses. If money for one's education has been limited, then funds may run out even before an ESL student enrolls in academic courses that grant credit. In addition, if financial aid has been used, time limits may be established for a completion date that adds additional pressures to complete the program. Kuo (2000) remarked that some

“ESL students who are unable to apply any of their coursework toward the community college graduation requirements may experience prolonged time and increased costs in their education experience” (p. 2), which again serves as a detriment to retention.

In addition to curriculum and staffing issues, the educational environment may provide another barrier to retention. When classes are large, scheduling is impractical, classrooms are uncomfortable and isolated from the mainstream population, testing is unreliable and often results in the wrong placement, and pre-enrollment counseling is minimal, then students are more apt to feel that the environmental barriers within the educational institution are too challenging and surrender their goals for English language learning and acculturation. Eger-Herz (2000) encouraged educators and administrators to design practical curriculum directly linked to the needs of the students, to discuss the various issues with the students, allow for feedback to determine the action and to require each instructor to become familiar with each student’s objectives.

Swail (2004) advised educators to recognize that a revision of curricular and instructional approaches is incomplete without a direct connection to assessment practices. Spelleri (2007) suggested that instructors eliminate cultural bias on tests, write on the board to accommodate multiple learning styles, and prepare and distribute a lecture outline to aid students who need assistance in organizing the information. As a result, being aware of and developing a plan to eliminate marginalization has more often than not assisted in student retention rather than attrition (Crandall & Shepard, 2004).

Another significant barrier to education, according to Jukes and MacDonald (2007), is that educational institutions do not think with 21st century minds. Today’s

educational systems are tasked to provide learners with the right tools to guide them through the critical thinking process so they will know how to ask the right questions and make the right connections; however, “the problem is that the world is not the stable, static place it once was. The world has changed and continues to change” (Jukes & MacDonald, 2007, p. 1) and has required constant updating in the student’s tool box of skills. Not only are speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills important to all students, and especially the ESL students, but today information and technical skills as well as collaborative skills are needed to be able to meet the challenges of tomorrow, both within the community and the workforce. Swail (2004) recommended that “the continued development of curricula and pedagogical practice is perhaps the most important and fundamental need that colleges must address in terms of student retention” (p. 29). Only when the needs of the ESL students who rely on community colleges for English language instruction and subsequently acculturation support are met will they meet their goals.

Utilizing education as a vehicle toward language acquisition and acculturation has created “a lot of pressure, high hopes and expectations” (Frias-Boson, 2000, p. 1) for these immigrant military spouses. Community colleges continue to design additional programs to create meaningful opportunities through options, choices, and relationships of trust, commitment, and communication that promote self-efficacy, encourage persistence, foster resiliency, and support retention. Educational failure has been a high price for immigrant spouses to pay when programs and administrators lack the commitment to foster a supportive environment.

Siebert (2000) stated that “teaching adult learners requires more advanced...skills than teaching traditional students [because] adult learners begin college classes with more fears and concerns than traditional younger students” (p. 1). Yet, research according to the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) (2005) explained that resilient people draw on core strengths to cope with adversity and that “people with healthy coping skills, self-knowledge, personal meaning and perspective, optimism, and strong relationships are well equipped to successfully confront the challenges of life” (p. 3). Although military-related immigrant spouses may consider themselves persistent and resilient, they occasionally continue to drop out or stop out of community college English language programs because the end result does not reflect the effort needed. The resulting cost to the military immigrant whose needs were unmet may be unrealized hopes and dreams.

Language acquisition, according to Foppoli (2006), must refocus from grammar rules, patterns, drills, repetitions, and rote memorization to the practice of using the language in personal, social, and workplace situations. To become an English language user, Glew (1998) suggested that grammar be replaced by a focus on conversational skills. Glew (1998) also stated that when English language learners engage in verbal interaction within college classrooms, in the workplace, and at home, they are more apt to reach second language development more quickly than those who intermittently communicate. Language, then, is acquired through social interaction and practice. Rossiter (2003) conducted a study of full-time ESL students in Canada to examine the effects of affective strategy instruction for language proficiency. The results indicated

that the more time spent with the same teacher and cohort contributed to rapid second language learning as well as social-emotional growth.

In another empirical study of 11th grade male students from the Islamic Saudi Academy in Virginia, Chizzo (2002) examined the relationship between the social and psychological factors in second language acquisition during a two-week study using journals and Schumann's Acculturation Model as a guide. Chizzo (2002) determined that language shock, cultural shock, motivation, and ego played an important role in determining the success of language acquisition and pidginization. In addition, second language learners benefited from practice through peer interaction if conducted solely in the English language. As a result, language development was advanced within supportive cohorts where learning was shared and students gained a voice through practice.

English language acquisition serves to unlock the American dream where immigrants become productive citizens within a bicultural life that is ripe with opportunities (Anderson, 2008). In fact, English language acquisition assists the immigrant in her new environment by offering opportunities for meaningful communication and independence within the workforce, the community, the culture, and the life within the United States. Thus, community college programs serve to offer immigrant spouses new possibilities. Immigrants are better able to achieve identity and membership in the society of the United States (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998) and better advocate for themselves in formal and non-formal settings when their husbands deploy or serve temporary duties at other military installations.

Curry (2001) posited that women with more education from their home countries would more likely persist in the English language programs than those with less education. In addition, those with less self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience are believed to become more vulnerable to personal, social, and emotional challenges (Bandura, 1995) and drop out or stop out of language programs despite their need for English language skills. Those immigrant students with personal characteristics such as self-efficacy, the need to fluently communicate with their husbands in English, the desire for acculturation or socialization, or the need to become a role model to their children by becoming competent in the English language are more apt to persist and reach their goals.

A significant factor to consider when immigrant military spouses enroll in various educational programs is that they often arrive on campus with differing learning styles and levels of education, varying persistence levels, and limited literacy and English language abilities. Bernat (2004), expanding the ideas of Ponton et al. (2005), posited that it is important to recognize the differing levels of experience students bring into the college classrooms when learning English and acculturating into the United States society. Turula (2005) suggested that to maximize the enrollment and placement process for these women, an evaluation should be conducted during enrollment to determine the appropriate course placement. Turula (2005) advised that assessments such as the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) or the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) coupled with student input would not only provide the

appropriate placement but establish a benchmark to monitor and evaluate student growth while focusing on the programs as well as student retention.

This research explored the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external (structural) and the internal (personal) forces that facilitated or hindered their English language learning in an ESL program at a community college. In addition, this research included an exploration of the movement toward acculturation into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

Three strands driving this research involving postsecondary military-related immigrant spouses included Acculturation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Retention Theory. Without adequate English language skills, immigrants who desire acculturation into the culture of the United States may find their goals delayed, which would serve to challenge their basic freedoms and the right to make personal choices in the receiving culture. Therefore, English language acquisition serves as a significant vehicle to assist in acculturation to the culture of the United States. Yet, even with advanced program planning, without persistence, self-efficacy, and resilience, immigrants may withdraw from the English language and acculturation processes, become ensnared in barriers, and become victims of attrition by dropping out of established community college programs.

English Language Acquisition

The 21st century workforce within the United States has transformed from an agricultural labor market to a goods producing and service providing nation. The changing economy now includes employment in construction and manufacturing as well as retail trade, government, educational and health services, and leisure and hospitality employment (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008) where the English language is required. In the 1990 Census, about half of all immigrants who came to the United States did not speak English (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). As a result, a demand for new, improved, and continued adult ESL instructional programs in second language acquisition resulted. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – Title II of 1998 established objectives to assist immigrant adults to become literate in the English language and in gaining skills needed for their livelihoods. Condelli (2001) reported that roughly 32% of non-native English speakers enter the United States at the lowest level of literacy and struggle to learn English. For these immigrants, learning a second language has not only been a challenging cognitive and linguistic activity but included understanding the social and cultural aspects of the receiving culture as well (Johnson & Roen, 1989) that often creates coping challenges for immigrants who enter the United States with varying levels of English language proficiency and with different reasons for entry.

English language acquisition has historically served as a vehicle to bridge the old culture with the new. Participation in English language classes as a course of action, then, has been known to influence their acculturation process and facilitate movement into the culture of the United States. Although there has been minimal research

conducted on second language acquisition (SLA) in the adult education contexts, much research has been conducted within the K-12 levels (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

These authors stated that research in the field is challenging due to the complexities of second language instruction for the adult learner. In addition, tracking learner progress has been difficult due to the mobility of the population and the different contexts within which SLA occurs, especially within ESL, family literacy, and workplace classes.

However, English language acquisition has remained a vehicle for the immigrant military spouses to acculturate into society within the United States through educational programs, enabling transitions into the workforce.

Although the population differed from Moss and Ross-Feldman's (2003) study, Abdullah and Eng's (2006) quantitative, empirical study validated the need for learners to become proficient in the English language. In a Malaysian ESL program, 200 undergraduates and 131 secondary school students from different ethnic groups in Malaysia, which included Malay, Chinese, and Indian, exhibited a positive attitude toward learning English. The learners identified the English language as a tool for national development and personal progress and related learning the English language to their sense of ethnic and national identity. The latter imparts the significance and importance for learning English and mirrors the needs of the immigrant military spouse in the United States.

Not all immigrants have entered the United States with the same English proficiency levels. Huang (2002) reported that this has been due to the varying educational levels of one's birthplace and ethnicity. Many immigrants enter the United

States with high school diplomas and college degrees from countries where English language instruction was limited or not available, while in other countries, English literacy and fluency were required to advance within the educational and employment spheres such as universities, international corporations, and governmental positions. Although Huang's (2002) data did not segregate the information by gender, it is significant that about 84% of the Mexican migrant farm workers in his study only spoke Spanish, had an average of a sixth grade education from Mexican schools, and reported a high school completion rate of only 15%. In fact, only 20% of the farm workers studied had participated in adult education programs, such as the GED or English language programs, and even fewer had attempted college courses.

As a result of this mix of language skills and abilities, immigrants, especially those who marry United States service members, continue to face challenges as they adapt to society within the United States, the home, the workforce, and educational institutions. Despite compelling challenges, many continue to aspire to achieve the American dream to seek a higher purpose, succeed as productive citizens, take advantage of opportunities, and enjoy the new flavors of bicultural life (Anderson, 2008). Although some of the immigrant military spouses lack the English language proficiency needed to move them toward improved personal communication and acculturation, many women continue to attempt a course of action, create coping techniques, locate beneficial environments, and continue to believe in their ability to succeed in a variety of situations. Self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience are characteristics inherent in their personal development that may lead them to

transformation from immigrant toward acculturated spouse of a United States' military member.

Theoretical Framework

Berry's Acculturation Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's Retention Theory comprised the theoretical framework that informs and assists in an understanding of the acculturation experiences of immigrant spouses of United States military personnel on a public community college campus within the United States.

Situating this study within these theories will better assist educators and administrators in recognizing and understanding the immigrant experience. The first section identified and explained Acculturation Theory by Berry. The second section focused on Social Learning Theory by Bandura, while the third area of literature reviewed Retention Theory by Tinto.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation is a sociocultural adaptation that explains how an immigrant "manage[s] daily life in the new cultural context" (Berry, 2002, p. 32) while maintaining one's cultural identity. Acculturation Theory explains the "psychological changes induced by cross-cultural imitation" (Rudmin, 2003, p. 2) evident within culturally plural societies. Berry (1980, 1983, 2001) is credited with organizing the constructs of Acculturation Theory into two specific parts. The first investigated the interaction between people from different cultures and focused on how they influence each other to create personal change. The second part investigated ethnic relations, stereotypes, and patterns of prejudice that frequently influence the interaction and may affect their

acculturation into their receiving culture. Both parts indicate that a bridge must be formed between their home culture and that of the United States for acculturation to take place, which is significant for those immigrant military spouses who wish to make the United States their home.

To expand Berry's theory, Padilla and Perez (2003) explained that immigrants, when challenged to make sense of their new environment, make decisions about the extent of their integration into their new host culture. Not only do their values, beliefs, traditions, social relations, societal norms, religious beliefs, gender roles, customs, and mannerisms differ, but English language usage is also a significant issue. To understand the cultural contexts necessitates a linguistic competence in the English language (Culhane, 2004); therefore, immigrants often turn to educational settings for English language learning because, as voluntary minorities, they believe that education provides a route to acculturation (Collier, Brice & Oades-Sese, 2007).

To initiate acculturation, a relationship must begin between the home and the host group, but the reality is that the result may be either a positive or a negative response. Acculturative stress and adaptation challenges often result from forces working against acculturation. An example of a negative response involved Amer and Hovey (2007) who addressed the mental health problems that resulted from a negotiation between American and Arab cultures and their role responsibilities. In this quantitative, empirical study, 120 participants were second generation Arab Americans who agreed to participate in several Internet-based instruments such as the Arab Ethnic Identity Measure questionnaire, the Arab Acculturation Scale, and the Age Universal Intrinsic-

Extrinsic Scale. Amer and Hovey (2007) indicated that 16.7% of those who participated in the study had immigrated to the United States below the age of five but still faced health difficulties that included depression when acculturating into the society of the United States. As a result, mental health problems among the Arab Americans increased due to the need for them to negotiate the differences between the American and Arab cultures and their inherent role responsibilities.

Similarly, Tong (2000) examined newly arrived immigrants from China and their willingness to utilize the English language. Tong (2000) reported that of the 190 Chinese adolescents studied using the Social Adaptation Questionnaire as well as demographic data within this quantitative study, the majority of the adolescents were resistant to acculturate due to the linguistic and social pressures they perceived. Yet, Ying, Lee, and Tsai (2000) explained that immigrants who were bicultural enjoyed a higher sense of coherence, but that in their study of Chinese immigrant and American born Chinese students, racial discrimination was a contributing factor they felt prevented them from obtaining the American dream and affected their cultural pride.

Collier et al. (2007) warned that psychological responses to the acculturation process may resemble various disabling conditions to include stress, anxiety, silence, withdrawal, distractibility, and fatigue, especially when one culture is decidedly different from another. Collier et al. (2007) also acknowledged that measures exist to determine the acculturation level, but these are not infallible instruments. Since no two people acculturate the same way at the same pace, it benefits students to separate out possible culture shock from learning or emotional disabilities. Yet, immigrants who possess

strong motivation are seen as more likely to form bonds with others and achieve a new sense of identity. When immigrants share values, languages, cultural stories, and behavior patterns, this exchange offers an understanding of the various cultures that, according to Ray (2002), is seen as a kaleidoscope of cultures, identities, and histories.

Although Berry's (1980, 1997, 1998) theory included assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization, this study focused only on integration within the acculturation process. Defined as "holding on to the important parts of one's heritage, while at the same time becoming a full participant in the life of the larger society" (Berry, 1998, p. 1), acculturation assists the immigrant in blending cultures through the integration process. Reyes (2006) addressed the ethnic identity inherent within a bicultural setting of Filipina women who married United States military members. Although she focused more on assimilation, she explained that "people wish to emigrate due to the visions of America as 'the land of milk and honey' where opportunities for upward mobility are 'endless' and because of their familiarity with American cultural knowledge and society" (p. 7). In fact, Reyes (2006) emphasized that "five out of seven women interviewed denied migrating to the United States for economic reasons, or for reasons prompted by American ideology" (p. 16); yet, she felt that the women she interviewed may not have wanted to disclose reasons that may "reflect poorly on themselves" (p. 17). Whatever personal reasons influenced their decision to marry an American service member, Reyes (2006) believed that these women did search for ways to migrate to the United States and became completely dependent on their husbands with their only freedom within their kitchens. In addition, Reyes (2006) reported that "the

Filipina women of study express their gratitude and subsequent debt to their husbands for bringing them to the States,” (p. 19) which led them to accept their husbands as the power brokers or gatekeepers within their marriages. According to Reyes (2006), “the dynamics within these marriages may often mimic parent-child relations, in part due to the husband being the key to American cultural knowledge” (p. 20). Thus, many husbands make the choice whether to support their wives with acculturation to life within the United States. For those men who encourage their wives with English language acquisition and acculturation into society within the United States, cultural integration, English language education, and cultural brokering serve to link the immigrant military spouse to the receiving culture. This study focused on the blending of cultures through the acculturation process (Berry, 1998) and the resulting social cohesion from English language acquisition.

Cultural Integration

Wichert (1996) posited that immigrants become productive and comfortable in their receiving culture during the acculturation process through intercultural, oral communication. Kim (1994) submitted that an intercultural identity allowed immigrants “to grow beyond their original culture and encompass a new culture, gaining additional insight into both cultures in the process” (p. 2) while utilizing the English language. Through communication, the immigrant develops comprehensible insights into the new culture as well as increasing language competence. Although Kim’s (1994) work focused on mass media and communication channels, her work, nevertheless,

emphasized that “acculturation is a natural process of adaptation of an individual who has been socialized in one culture and moves to another” (p. 3).

Intercultural communication is a step beyond Berry’s model and provided an additional path to bridge the gap between cultures. Using the concept of intercultural communication means, for example, that cultures are compared and contrasted, thus providing the opportunity for cultural reflection as well as intercultural knowledge and awareness. Djordjevic (2009) added that “acknowledging and proactively working with student cultural identity rather than just focusing on linguistic competence can empower and motivate English language learners” (p. 4) and move them closer to acculturation.

According to Al Mansoori (2009), cultural integration creates unity and social cohesion. Integration does not suggest assimilation; rather, integration involves developing a tolerance for multicultural diversity, a willingness to step out of one’s comfort zone to experience another culture, and acculturate into the host society. Additionally, Ray (2002) explained that a majority of immigrants choose to build life in a new country and live in a society where integration is more than simply a melting pot with a blend of cultures. In a quantitative study, Gurung and Mehta (2001) assessed the ethnic identity and self-concepts of Indian descent health care professionals who held strong ethnic identities and positive attitudes about health issues. Of the 150 questionnaires that were circulated at a national conference for physicians of Indian descent, 90 were men, and 60 were women representing about 50% of the United States. This suggested that the more one is comfortable with one’s self, the greater is the resulting ethnic identity. Due to their personal self-concepts, attitudes, and tolerance

toward treating minority clients, especially with alternative therapies, “minority clients may receive preferential treatment from female rather than male health providers” (Gurung & Mehta, 2001, p. 148).

Connections between not only students but with the educational institutions, the military, the churches, and the community are essential if acculturation is to occur (Teraguchi, 2001). Colleges are being challenged to shift paradigms to meet the needs of this diverse population as a result of student demand (Elsner, 1994). This increase in the number of immigrant students has occasioned programs where students are provided the opportunity to make choices, learn marketable skills, and become comfortable with their new culture (Appelt, 2006) and English language in a supportive, welcoming educational environment and community. In addition, it has been especially important to enable “learners to begin thinking about how they learn and what works best for them” (Gosselin, 1998, p. 2) in their English language and acculturation efforts as they gain access into not only social, political, and academic development but the 21st century workplace. By relating learning and instruction to their past experiences and prior knowledge (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998), they become partners in building programs specifically designed to meet their needs (Gosselin, 1998). As a result, English language programs within educational institutions have proven that the earlier an immigrant commences working with and in the language, the more quickly she will be able to utilize that language and become more comfortable in her receiving culture.

English Language Education Programs

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL) (2001) reported that “attending adult English as a Second Language classes in the first few years after immigration helps provide an ideal transition into the culture of the United States because in addition to English language skills, immigrants learn other communication tools and coping strategies” (p. 22). Although Tong’s (2000) research indicated that many of the newly arrived Chinese adolescent students studied were resistant to the linguistic and social pressure to acculturate, the population studied did not include immigrant military spouses who were adults and planned to live in the United States. Likewise, Abdullah and Eng (2006) determined that when immigrants recognized the need for language acquisition for occupational purposes, they were more inclined to learn the new language. The NREL (2001) also stated that language education served as a vehicle toward acculturation if the immigrant was strongly motivated to learn, was willing to practice the language, and wanted to use education and problem-solving skills for English language acquisition.

With knowledge of and access to available educational programs, the immigrant military wife may become aware of English language programs that are compatible with teaching the traditions within the United States (Merage Foundation, 2007). For other immigrants, cultural brokering, which involves advocating for the immigrant, serves to bond some immigrants together and often facilitates English language learning that leads to acculturation, while for others the brokering creates additional challenges.

Cultural Brokering

Jones and Trickett (2005) expanded Berry's Acculturation Theory by adding the element of cultural brokering that includes bridging, linking, or mediating between people of different cultural backgrounds. A cultural broker is a go-between, a navigator, or a liaison who advocates on behalf of an immigrant group. The cultural broker may include an immigrant's child who negotiates between two cultures, an organizational leader such as a parent liaison who bridges the cultural gaps, or a community college, church, or military program, or laws enacted to assist with literacy and skills needed for their livelihoods. Whatever the function, the cultural broker unites groups to explore the differences between the sending and the receiving cultures.

In their research, Jones and Trickett (2005) studied child and mother pairs from the former Soviet Union who utilized cultural brokering. It was determined that the broker role was "primarily driven by the acculturation processes of parents, not to the abilities of the children" (Jones & Trickett, 2005, p. 17). Likewise, the negative results for the children included not only emotional stress but family disagreements and decreased interaction between school and friends. Although other researchers have found positive outcomes, Jones and Trickett (2005) suggested that culture brokering that includes such activities as answering the telephone, the door, or serving as a translator have impacted some children and affected the parent and child dynamic. An example of a negative medical situation involves a child who may have to attend and translate for a parent at a doctor's visit. If the situation includes an involved medical history or a sensitive subject for a child, then that child may become emotionally affected by an

overload of personal parental information, or the child may mistranslate due to a misunderstanding of medical terms from a lack of vocabulary. As a result, cultural brokering may result in more disadvantages than advantages. The implications must be weighed prior to bridging the gap between cultures through brokering.

Another example of cultural brokering included the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – Title II (WIA) that was established in 1998 to provide services to help adults complete a secondary education and assist with their literacy and skills needed within the workforce. This act suggested a collaborative effort to pool strengths between community colleges, educational agencies, and other programs that had before competed for available funds. Identification of problem areas and possible solutions focused on the educational development and skills immigrants needed to become employable, productive members of the workforce. Thus, the resulting cultural brokering united agencies with programs designed to assist the immigrant into the workforce.

Cultural integration, English language education programs, and cultural brokering guide immigrant military spouses toward a sociocultural adaptation to United States society while maintaining their cultural identity (Berry, 2002). To further explain an immigrant's movement toward acculturation, Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that sociocultural familiarization couples social learning with the personal forces such as self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence inherent within the immigrant's internal core and increases one's ability to reach success in multiple situations.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura includes learning and development (Cherry, 2009) involving the social element of learning from others, which is especially significant and helpful to immigrants. In 1977 Bandura introduced self-efficacy as one's ability to succeed in a variety of situations. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) has become an umbrella term for how many people learn, what role social persuasion and support may play in encouraging their behavior, and the ways they regulate their own behaviors. According to Cherry (2009), those who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy likely view problems as challenges to master and exercise a deep interest in activities, commit to the cause, and recover quickly from setbacks or disappointments. Bandura's theory involving self-efficacy helps explain why some immigrant military spouses are successful in their efforts to acculturate into society within the United States while others are not.

There is a growing body of literature available today that supports the idea that accomplishments and feelings of positive well-being involve a sense of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1994), life is "full of impediments, adversities, setbacks, frustrations, and inequities. People must have a robust sense of personal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed" (p. 6). For military spouses, acculturation requires not only effort, dedication, and a strong sense of self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence but a commitment to acquiring the English language skills needed to transition into the host society. Since the mind, behavior, and the environment continue to play a significant role in learning, Bandura's (1977) theory remains an

effective model because of its relevance to the immigrant military spouse. Not only does this theory include identification with a model similar to the observer, but it stimulates new behaviors that include English language acquisition that has been known to increase personal communication within the family and aid with a move toward acculturation. Despite barriers, many immigrant students persist and reach success; yet, there are some who do not and temporarily or permanently transition out of the educational environment. Despite a high level of self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience, she may become challenged and succumb to the rigors of a new community and military life, leading to attrition rather than remaining enrolled in the available programs (Tinto, 1987). As a result, the immigrant may leave empty-handed – without the required English language skills necessary for effective communication and a seamless transition into the receiving culture and the workforce. Therefore, Student Retention Theory has become a significant goal for many educational programs (Frias-Boson, 2000).

Self-Efficacy

For the immigrant military wife, the quest for English language acquisition, coupled with the desire for acculturation, provide challenges that tax their motivation to succeed. Bandura (1994, 1995, 1997) provided insight into why some people reach success in life's transitions while others do not. He stated that when those with high levels of self-efficacy believe they are able to do something, they are capable of influencing events by controlling their performance. Bandura (1994) posited that those who possess a high sense of efficacy “visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance” (p. 3). By attempting to predict events and create

ways of controlling them, those with higher levels of self-efficacy will more likely accomplish their goals.

Bandura (1994) also stated that people motivate themselves and guide their actions through foresight. As a result, people form ideas about what they are capable of and can accomplish; they set goals and plan a course of action. They determine how much time, energy, and effort to expend and establish checks to determine if their performance has been productive. Likewise, according to Bandura (1994), those individuals with a stronger sense of self-efficacy are more willing to take on challenging and threatening activities while regulating their reactions to stress, discomfort, disorientation, and anxiety.

For the immigrant military spouse, the opportunity to learn from others reinforces their self-esteem and plays a significant part in their adaptation to a variety of external as well as internal challenges. Bandura (1994) posited that there are four psychological processes embedded in self-efficacy that include the characteristics of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation factors. These may help to move the military spouse closer to acculturation. The cognitive processes involve attending to the construction of options, weighing the possibilities, and testing and revising them to determine how well one's choices fared. This process includes one's coping capabilities and how much stress and depression the spouse may be forced to experience in order to achieve success while creating positive environments and exercising some control over their daily activities. The motivational factors include planning a course of action to

realize the expectations of particular behaviors and adjusting the effort that is needed to master the challenges while building relationships with others.

In a quantitative study that examined the effects of measures of self-efficacy, Rossiter (2003) concluded that ESL programs provide not only for the social-emotional growth of students but for English language proficiency as well. Rossiter (2003) examined the effects of second language proficiency and self-efficacy on 31 adult ESL full-time students in Canada. Rossiter (2003) determined that social-emotional student growth was equally as important as second language learning and concluded that full-time students who spent at least 25 hours a week with the same teacher and peers fared better than their counterparts who changed classes and did not realize the same continuity. However, many immigrant women do not have the freedom to spend that much time away from home due to their husbands' military commitments.

Holden (1999) and Spelleri (2007) explained that many immigrant students feel alienated from the mainstream community college and experience a sense of marginalization within the classrooms due to their limited time on campus. Barger (2003) warned that ethnocentrism on a campus may create a barrier to social learning when one group misunderstands another. Yet, through interpersonal communications implemented within the classrooms and through telecommunications, people have the opportunity to cross cultural barriers and collaborate with each other (Cifuentes & Murphy, 2001).

Bandura (1994) stated that "by the choices they make, people cultivate different competencies, interests and social networks that determine life courses" (p. 6). Thus, the

choice of these military spouses to acculturate into life through an educational institution within the United States is an example of self-efficacy at work. Those who believe they are able to learn the English language as well as the mores and norms of this society are more apt to reach their goals of acculturation into the host society. A growing body of evidence exists that one's accomplishments stem from a positive, optimistic outlook about life coupled with personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). A quantitative study by Ying et al. (2000) identified the cultural orientation of 122 American born Chinese young adults and 231 immigrant Chinese American college students at a major university in California. This study utilized a demographic background questionnaire, the Sense of Coherence Questionnaire, and the General Ethnicity Questionnaire in Chinese and American versions. The results revealed that bicultural immigrants enjoyed a greater sense of coherence resulting from English language learning, social affiliation, and cultural pride. This study remains applicable to the immigrant military spouse who chooses to undergo challenges to learn English and become acculturated into society within the United States.

Furthermore, Bandura (1994) also believed that despite personal impediments, adversities, setbacks, and frustrations, people with high levels of self-efficacy could meet the demands of life. Thus, those with a strong sense of self-efficacy would more likely recover quickly from educational impacts, personal setbacks, and disappointments due to their persistent desire to master their challenges while targeting their acculturation. Yet, resilience is another personal factor that influences one's ability to succeed in a variety of situations.

Resilience

Resilience, an internal mental state, is an example of the ability to cope or overcome the stresses associated with adversity and is also known as “a function of risk factors intersecting with protective factors” (Ziegler, Bain, Bell, McCallum, & Brian, 2002, p. 8). Risk factors may include an international marriage, moving to the United States, losing a job, an injury or death to a spouse during military conflict or troop movement, recognizing and responding to English language barriers, feeling discomfort within the classroom, becoming overwhelmed by the uncertainties of life or social situations, or lacking military or familial support, to cite a few examples. On the other hand, protective factors may include but are not limited to a supportive husband, an encouraging family network, effective institutional programs, community membership, self-directed learning, goal setting, resiliency, persistence, self-efficacy, determination, and teacher support (McMillan, Reed, & Bishop, 1992).

A study of resilience began in the 1970s spearheaded by Werner and Smith’s (1977) longitudinal study of high-risk children in Kauai, Hawaii. The 698 children included the ethnic groups of: Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Korean, Anglo-Caucasians, and part and full Hawaiians. These children were born in 1955 into adverse circumstances that included chronic poverty (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 2000), mental health problems, and antisocial behaviors; yet, those who exhibited traits of resiliency grew into successful adults as evidenced by Werner and Smith’s (1982) follow up at ages 1, 2, 10, 18, 32, and 40.

Although Bandura's Social Learning Theory primarily dealt with aggression and deviant behavior from a psychological perspective, his observational learning included the positive characteristics of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation that influence behavior. Also known as imitation or modeling, Bandura (1977) explained that in observational learning, individuals must be attentive to the modeled behaviors, especially relating to behavior and the shared dialog. To reproduce the modeled behavior, retention allows for a coding of the information into long-term memory and retrieval on demand. Motor reproduction involves the physical capabilities of the modeled behavior and produces an imitation. Finally, motivation is influenced by the expectation of positive reinforcements for the modeled behavior. According to Isom (1998), "the social learning theory advocates that individuals...imitate or copy modeled behavior from personally observing others, the environment, and the mass media" (p. 8). Bandura's theory, then, is especially useful to ESL teachers who facilitate the modeling of the behaviors of successful students. By providing an assessment of the successes or failures of immigrant students who have either completed the program or are near completion, new students will be able to copy successful behaviors of others that may positively impact the retention statistics within the program.

Bandura's (1994) theory addressed learning through observation that is an effective technique for the classroom where learning occurs when behavior is observed and imitated. For example, when an immigrant spouse observes others actively involved in English language learning, educational, and acculturation processes, she is more likely to reproduce that behavior through imitation and is more apt to reach her goals. Bandura

(1994) identified three steps to self-regulation that clarified modeling theory: (a) self-observation, (b) judgment, and (c) self-response. Self-observation begins with a look at one's behavior. Judgment involves the immigrant comparing herself to others, and self-response includes a self-comparison to the model. By emulating role models, immigrants are able to learn behaviors, emotionally respond to a variety of situations, and build attitudes from their observations in order to move more quickly toward English language acquisition and acculturation.

In 1992, McMillan and Reed expanded Bandura's Social Learning Theory and created a resiliency model of traits that students need for success in school. These traits include "the personal traits of self-efficacy, goals, personal responsibility, optimism, internal expectations, and coping ability" (Pisapia & Westfall, 2006, p. 1.) By including Bandura's Theory, specifically self-efficacy, successful problem-solving stems from tapping into one's inner strengths. Reivich and Shatte (2002) reinforced Bandura's theory by stating that "research shows that the essential ingredient in steering through chronic stress is self-efficacy – the belief that you can master your environment and effectively solve problems as they arise" (p. 19). In addition, Reivich and Shatte (2002) added that self-efficacy is a result of successful problem-solving and taking control of one's behavior. In fact, observation of "the differential effects of their own actions [aid] individuals [to] discern which responses are appropriate in which settings" (Bandura, 1977, p. 140). Rather than succumbing to adverse conditions, resilient women with high views of their personal efficacy would more likely overcome obstacles that infiltrate

home and life on a constant basis. Thus, resiliency has been noted as the key to achieving one's goals and objectives.

According to Bernat (2004), most immigrant “adults have a specific purpose for learning. Most of the time, adults attend courses because they have a specific need” (p. 5). Moreover, students who are serious about their education are more apt to demonstrate commitment to their goals and make every attempt to achieve them. Likewise, their mindsets and high self-expectations afford them more opportunity to negate risks and move toward English language competency, empowerment, success, and acculturation through their resilience and dedication to their goals.

Resiliency, as explained by Waxman, Gray, and Padron (2003), referred to the factors and processes that limit negative behaviors in response to stress and result in adaptive outcomes despite adversity. For example, Warren (1998) explained that facing various challenges and adversities required not only personal strength but resiliency: “This strength is not physical...but is psychological and spiritual in nature. This strength can only be obtained from life experiences and one's belief system” (p. 1). The most current studies focus on students' abilities to adapt to the various stressors in today's classrooms. Students may be labeled at-risk as a result of gender, race, ethnic background, geographical location, socio-economic status, grades, assessments, or achievement test scores. Although the resiliency model basically focused on elementary, middle, and high school students from minority families with low income, the model is certainly applicable to immigrant military spouses in the community college setting for whom failure to acquire the English language is and continues to remain a possibility.

Therefore, determining the factors that promote resiliency may lead to improvements in programs, increase the retention rate, and serve to assist students not only in their English language learning but in acculturation as well.

In addition, Warren (1998) suggested that if, for example, a child lived in a negative environment, such as one with abuse, neglect, and fear, the child was expected to resort to a life of crime, alcoholism, unemployment, and despair; however, through personal faith and belief in oneself, available support systems, and coping skills, children possess the potential to recover as they gather strength from various challenging adversities. The same may be true with immigrant military spouses who generate the same strength during times of adversity and recover quickly (Siebert, 2005). Not only are these women capable of thriving under pressure, but they are often quick to adapt to life's crises and challenges by focusing on their optimism, resourcefulness, and determination (Fowler, 2000). Resiliency, then, has not only been a commitment to a goal but a personal determination and dedication to reach a goal. Resiliency has been likened to adaptation, the capacity to learn to live through fear and uncertainty, the ability to adapt in spite of significant life adversities, and the skill to adjust to challenging life experiences (Meichenbaum, 2005).

Foreign born military wives who sought acculturation as well as United States citizenship have displayed numerous resiliency traits evidenced by their desire and dedication to learn the English language and adapt to the culture of the United States. Not only are they optimistic about life, but they are confident in their ability to bring about personal change or transformation to meet their needs (Meichenbaum, 2005), both

in English language learning and acculturation. Resilient students, according to Waxman et al. (2003) generally have exhibited a “significantly higher social self-concept, achievement motivation, and academic self-concept than non-resilient groups” (p. 6). This suggested that despite disruptions, setbacks, and adversities, resilient women buffer adversity and work through their feelings and reactions in healthy ways, expecting to rebuild their lives in ways that work best for them.

Siebert (2005) stated that resilient women may feel emotions such as sadness, anger, grief, a sense of loss, and oftentimes confusion when challenged by difficulties, but they refuse to let those feelings become permanent. Therefore, despite differences in their literacy levels, problem-solving abilities, levels of education, self-efficacy, and training in their home countries, these immigrant women remain united in their belief that community and educational institutions will continue to assist them in meeting their English language and acculturation needs. Self-confidence as well as positive expectations and personal self-control have guided them toward their desired personal goals and freedoms as they continue to make the United States their home.

Although many researchers have attended to a general study of adult learners at four-year colleges and universities by focusing on persistence and retention, none have specifically addressed the immigrant learner enrolled in community college English language programs located near United States military bases. Pascarella (1997, 1999, 2006) pointed out that community college students have not received the attention they deserve, and Pascarella and Terenzini (1998) advocated for a detailed investigation of student demographics to include immigrant students as a result of the increasing rate of

student diversity. In addition, Pascarella (1997) noted that “a relatively small number of research universities and elite liberal arts colleges set the accepted public and academic standard for what higher education is, or should be. It would be a very liberal estimate to say that even 5% of the studies...focused on community college students” (p. 15).

Student retention, persistence, and resilience remain a complex issue because not all students or institutions are alike (Swail, 2004), but the end result should be similar.

For the immigrant spouses, their objectives, educational backgrounds, experiences, and goals may differ from the mainstream adult student and continue to vary. As this population continues to expand, then, more research is needed to ensure success for this marginalized group of immigrant military wives in meeting their English language and acculturation goals as well as researching their characteristics of self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience (Crandall & Shepard, 2004). An identification of the personal strengths such as self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience embolden these military immigrant spouses and motivate them toward more timely English language learning and acculturation. Bandura’s theory complements not only the personal characteristics of resilience and persistence but Social Learning Theory that utilizes modeling of human behaviors as a guide for behavior and interaction. These strengths of modeling behavior are amplified by educational advocacies established to provide instruction, support, and encouragement to facilitate English language learning and acculturation.

As the skills of adult immigrant students improve within the classrooms, especially in English language and literacy, interaction provides an opportunity to learn

about the nuances of the culture of the United States. While taking classes, students are not only able to practice the English language by learning word usage within cultural contexts (Lucey, 1998), but they are provided the opportunity to engage in the social learning experience and move toward acculturation. Educational advocates acting as cultural brokers provide for the implementation and revision of programs to meet student needs. A result of successful programs that include collaboration or shared learning experiences more likely increases student retention and reflects Tinto's Retention Theory.

Shank and Terrill (1995) addressed Tinto's theory about retention and explained that a variety of advocacies and techniques are needed to address the multiple student abilities in adult ESL classes. Brod (1995), however, warned that time is an external factor that may affect attrition. For example, immigrant students may spend time testing, setting up counselor and financial aid visits, and becoming acclimated to the school's campus prior to beginning a class. This time lost becomes an obstacle and may cause discouragement before the classes actually begin. Even if these students persist in enrolling, oftentimes they may feel disenfranchised due to their inability to utilize English fluently to discuss and establish their educational goals with teachers, counselors, program directors, and support services. When institutional departments collaborate to advocate and provide quality services for these students, the students are more apt to persist and remain in the programs (Brod, 1995). Carlson (2007) reminded educators that "many immigrants make enormous sacrifices and endure amazingly difficult journeys to begin a new life in the United States" (p. 5). Through a variety of

educational advocacies, administrators would better understand the culture shock and that English language dysfluency often blocks educational success and creates personal esteem issues. By taking the time to patiently listen to these students, colleges may better assist the immigrant students in bridging the gap between the English language, culture within the United States, and acculturation and, ultimately, meet their goals in a timely manner.

Gollnick and Chinn (1998) warned that the planning and instruction of these students should be based on knowledge about students' cultures and made more meaningful by relating to students' own experiences and building on their prior knowledge. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) affirmed that research completed in the last decade has been indicative of the maturing field of adult learning; however, the immigrant military spouse who attends a community college has been largely ignored or marginalized (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004) except for basic theories and strategies about English language instruction more suitable for the traditional students. Another personal factor is persistence that assists the immigrant into the receiving culture through a healthy adaptation to the challenges inherent in the move toward acculturation.

Persistence

Persistence, also identified as self-beliefs, self-concepts, and self-efficacy, which is the belief about one's abilities, often serves as a vehicle for assisting in the healthy adaptation to the receiving culture as explained by Bandura (1995) and Ziegler et al. (2002). Bandura (1977) reported that attitudes and self-efficacy may facilitate acculturation for these immigrant students "by making self-rewarding reactions

conditional on attaining a certain level of behavior, individuals create self-inducements to persist in their efforts until their performances match self-prescribed standards” (p. 141).

Students’ attitudes about school may have originated from past experiences and helped shape their perceptions and beliefs about the efficacy of attending college and the persistence needed to complete the programs. According to Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorello (1996), an “important educational implication concerns the paramount role of self-regulatory influences in educational self-development” (p. 1219). In addition, “self-regulatory skills will not contribute much if students cannot get themselves to apply them persistently in the face of difficulties, stressors, and competing attractions” (Bandura, 1996, p. 1220). For instance, some past negative experiences such as humiliation, disrespect from a teacher, or alienation from other students may have been burned into their memories. Likewise, Bernat (2004) extended the concept of self-efficacy by pointing out that when students were “forced to use the language they are learning they constantly feel that they are representing themselves badly, showing only some of their real personality, only some of their real intelligence” (p. 6). As a result, if a student lacked the belief that she could successfully understand and apply the new language, low self-efficacy may cause task-avoidance, poor performance, and a decrease in self-esteem over time (Ziegler et al., 2002). When others mainly recollect positive encounters within the classrooms, their self-directed learning becomes augmented. Optimistic attitudes coupled with self-efficacy increase the confidence level to accomplish a particular task such as writing, speaking, listening, or reading in English.

Researchers have explored the relationship between self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence in the traditional student body, but few measures of persistence within this immigrant learner group have been conducted. Likewise, sparse research currently exists about the resiliency levels of this same group. For the most part, “all of the resiliency research to date has focused on children and adolescents” (Henderson & Milstein, 1996, p. 5), and there has been minimal information available about how resilient immigrant adults respond, react, and control the stressors that challenge them and may affect their retention within the educational English language programs.

Student Retention Theory

According to Crandall and Sheppard (2004), roughly 25% of the general community college population has originated from another country, and the numbers continue to rise. In response to the demands of this growing population, community colleges have continued the open-door admission policies designed to provide educational opportunities for all students, including those who are academically under-prepared (Illich, Hagan, & McCallister, 2004). Although the open-door policy has been beneficial to many, for others the lack of prior educational achievement has created more challenges and led to lower retention rates. This multi-ethnic influx, especially those associated with the United States military, has changed adult education into a service industry with an objective to meet the needs of these learners from culturally diverse backgrounds and varying levels of education (Bernat, 2004; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Kuo, 2000) and provide the skills needed for the workforce, English language development, and acculturation.

Beginning in the 1970s, theorists began investigating retention problems in higher education. Tinto (1975, 1982, 1993), credited with spearheading research into postsecondary level dropouts, considered the social and academic factors that influenced students to drop out of school. Tinto (2002b, d) encouraged taking student retention seriously, and in 2003 he advocated promoting student retention through classroom practices and believed “that participation in a collaborative or shared learning group enables students to develop a network of support that helps bond students to the broader social communities of the college while also engaging them more fully in the academic life of the institution” (Tinto, 1997, p. 613). Tinto (1997) conducted a multi-method experiential study with a qualitative focus that included a case study, questionnaires, participant observations, interviews, informal conversations, and telephone interviews to examine how participation in a collaborative learning program influenced students’ learning experiences and contributed to their retention. From 287 students at a community college, the study indicated that the experience of the classroom shapes not only student learning but persistence. Tinto (1997) explained that building classrooms as communities increases student retention and shapes student persistence. Since students are more likely to persist and complete various programs as a result of involvement and interaction in an environment that fosters learning, feelings of affiliation, and encourages their self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience, effective retention, then, stems from the development of educational communities (Tinto, 1990). The resulting collaborative, learning group fosters connections not only to the educational institution but the students and the available programs, which is especially important for immigrant military

students who are relatively unfamiliar with American education, the way of American life, and the English language.

Opponents of Tinto's Retention Theory included McCubbin (2003) who believed that Tinto's model was applicable only to the traditional student and not the typical adult ESL student because these part-time immigrant students speak varying levels of the English language and enter the classrooms with differing educational levels and goals (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). McClenney (2004) explained that community colleges encounter a disproportionately high number of students of color as well as those with English language and financial difficulties. Because the educational system has traditionally fixated on snapshots from a past theoretical curriculum and not an application-based curriculum for English language and job skills (Jukes & McCain, 2006, 2007), rethinking the curriculum and integrating 21st century skills may better meet the needs of immigrants and make them feel accepted and encouraged to remain in available educational programs such as Tinto (1997) advocated. Although Tinto's model of student retention did not specifically explore adult ESL students, his research is applicable to the immigrant spouses who benefit from a "safe haven in a sea of unfamiliar peers" (Tinto, 2002a, p. 5). Kuo (2000) stated that it is imperative that a broad spectrum of programs be offered to this diverse group of students, especially in the development of support networks and student engagement within academic life (Tinto, 1997). Without programs that include strategic institution-wide intervention strategies, multiple assessments, and accountability standards, the college campus may watch as attrition rates rise.

Crockett (2006) expanded Tinto's theory and posited that "retention should not be an institutional goal but rather a by-product of improved educational programs and services for students" (p. 24) and suggested that the institution work toward improving the quality of a student's life and learning. Herbert (2006) agreed and indicated that retention is a by-product of student satisfaction. Although Ziegler et al. (2002) warned that many students have been conditioned to believe they will not reach success although they have the capabilities, Tinto's Retention Theory indicated that students are likely to reach success and program completion from their internal, personal forces. Tinto (2002a, b, c,) is credited with promoting theories of student persistence and retention, focusing on students finishing college programs due to one's ability and effort. Likewise, Tolbert (2006) stated that students will more likely participate and persist in available programs if the courses and services offered meet their needs, are of high quality, and move them toward English language learning. It is important that these immutable, programmed decisions made for these students consider the end result – that of serving these students and moving them toward English language learning by encouraging their persistence, focusing on their retention, and pushing them toward acculturation into the society within the United States.

Persistence and Retention Equals Student Success

According to Martinez (2003), the difference between retention and persistence is that "retention refers to the number of learners or students who progress from one part of an educational program to the next," (p. 3) while persistence relates to advancement

toward an educational goal despite innumerable personal odds. Retention involves institutions, while persistence specifically involves the learner.

Many researchers advocate program planning and development to limit attrition within the educational institutions because retention is “a costly and problematic issue” (Swail, 2004, p. 4). To reach success, students must feel motivated to persist. Stamler (2007) advised that institutions recognize not only the educational needs of these students but their personal lives as well. For the military-related immigrant relying on English language skills for family needs, citizenship, or acculturation assistance, learning must occur, and skills must be transferable from the classrooms to the workrooms, homes, and into society. Tinto (2004) recommended that educational systems not only establish opportunities but support systems as well for all students in order to increase the retention rates.

Smith (2002) conducted an empirical qualitative study that included both a pilot study and focus groups to examine students’ perceptions of the impact of an academic advisor utilizing developmental or prescriptive advising through the students’ personal lens and experiences. The study included 34 first-year traditional students who lived on campus during their first two semesters in college. The results indicated that first-year students prefer prescriptive advising due to their uncertainties about the demands, constraints, and constructs of their educational programs, which demonstrated that school climate, especially support staff, may contribute to retention.

Tinto (1987) submitted that classrooms require a reshaping to provide students with improved connections to faculty, staff, support personnel, and other students who

are able to provide engagement and encourage enriched learning experiences. Retention “hinges on the construction of educational communities in college, program, and classroom levels which integrate students into the ongoing social and intellectual life of the institution” (Tinto, 1987, p. 188). In a 1997 study, Tinto examined how participation in a collaborative learning program influences students’ learning experiences through cohorts that allow for building supportive peer groups as well as constructing knowledge. Tinto delved into the issues of retention beginning in 1975 with his Student Integration Model (SIM) that led the way for attrition research. The SIM was designed to explain the aspects and processes that influenced a student’s decision to leave a college or university either as a stop out or as a drop out (McCubbin, 2003). To defeat attrition, student integration into the social and academic aspects of the institution would help them feel involved in the institutional community, and they would be more likely to persist due to the support, guidance, and information provided by the institution, faculty, staff, and other students. Despite their levels of persistence and resilience, if students are not socially integrated into campus life, they more than likely will leave the community college. As a result, both Tinto (2002c) and Swail (2004) believed in the imperative to promote retention and provide multiple opportunities for students to reach their goals within the educational community.

Zimitat (1997) conducted an empirical quantitative study utilizing Institutional Integration Scales, the CEQ Good Teaching Scale, and a satisfaction scale to examine the application of Tinto’s theory of student retention and examine the relationships between the aspects of Tinto’s model with good teaching and student satisfaction. The

study included first-year students at a metropolitan multi-campus in Australia with students who had continued their enrollment at that institution for 12 months. The study confirmed the relationships between Tinto's model that related to retention and students' perceptions about good teaching. Of significance was that curriculum design and teaching should follow Tinto's framework that is especially critical in the first half of a new semester.

Tinto (1998) suggested that educators develop numerous gateways to success that would not restrict access to any group because none has been more important or significant than the other. Swail (2004) espoused that student retention and persistence issues remain as pertinent today as they were when Tinto first published his Student Integration Model in 1975. Although there were some objections to Tinto's model, research conducted in New Guinea (Mannan, 2007) demonstrated that Tinto's model remains applicable for conducting research on student persistence and retention. By identifying the differing needs of the varying groups within the community college, retention is more likely to be influenced through a "compensatory relationship between academic and social integration" (Mannan, 2007, p. 161) to include some form of intervention such as educational advocacies that would more likely lead to students' retention.

With regards to student persistence, Alberts (2006) stated that "it is disheartening to realize that collectively, institutions virtually blame students for not persisting" (p. 2). According to Vandesteeg (2005), military members, in particular, often have no control over any temporary or permanent duty assignments and face frequent family separations.

Non-commissioned officer training, preparing and loading vehicles for transport to war zones, and field duties that are battle practices and simulations are examples of temporary assignments. Permanent assignments may include combat deployments to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, or anywhere in the world where others need military assistance for peacekeeping or combat in classified areas. As these military members leave their home stations, their spouses make a choice whether to return home, stay with friends, or move closer to their spouse's temporary duty station. "In this uncertain political climate of our world today, readiness is foremost on the minds of a large number of military personnel and their families" (Vandesteeg, 2005, preface). Deployments to worldwide locations may be unexpected with minimal notification to the military member and the family and may create the feelings of frustration, questions about how the family will cope with the separation, and worries about the safety and security of the military member in a combat zone (Vandesteeg, 2005). In addition, if the military spouse is a nonnative English speaker, the challenges brought by deployments may result in hardships that appear insurmountable to the spouse who lacks a support system. Retention researchers such as Tinto as well as Bean and Metzner (1985) did not include this type of variable in their model, nor did they address whether any student should be categorized as a drop out as a result of a military spouse serving in the active duty military, reserve forces, or the National Guard.

Establishing Conditions for Student Success

Although Tinto (2002b, d) had not specifically explored immigrant military spouses, he is credited with promoting theories of student persistence and retention,

moving away from the focus on students starting college programs to the finishing of them. His research can be applied to immigrant students and offers data to validate significant predictors of persistence. Tinto (2002b, d) offered five conditions that support persistence: (a) expectations, (b) support, (c) feedback, (d) involvement, and (e) learning.

Expectation suggests that “no one rises to low expectations” (Tinto, 2002a, p. 4). Because many immigrant students come from backgrounds that have excluded them from higher education, they entered into community colleges within the United States uncertain about where to begin, how they fit into the academic experience, and why they are frequently confused about their performance.

Advice provides students with information about program requirements. They “need to understand the road map to completion and know how to use it to achieve personal goals” (Tinto, 2002a, p. 5) if they are going to commit to a semester or more of learning.

Support serves as a life-link to academic, social, and personal needs (Tinto, 2005). Like Tinto, Holden (1999) supported Tinto’s premises and believed that students benefit more when they interact with others who are committed to improving their lives through education. A report by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) (2006) identified challenges such as “insufficient academic preparation, multiple work and family demands, financial constraints, inadequate childcare, and lack of connection to the college community” (p. 1) that affect retention. Tinto (1997) encouraged student participation in a learning community to develop a network of supportive peers to aid the

transition to college and integration into the new culture while Astin (1975, 1984) and Morgan (2001) held that student involvement prevented students from dropping out.

Involvement requires that immigrant spouses feel welcome on campus. Tinto (1997) explained that in addition to student persistence, resilience, and dedication to their goals, frequent, quality contacts from faculty and staff link this group to the campus and encourage them to maintain their enrollment despite challenges and barriers. Tinto (2000) warned that student involvement matters “when student attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution so weak” (p. 5). Likewise, Chaves (2003, 2006) supported Tinto’s Retention Theory and suggested that student involvement and development would lead to retention.

Learning stems from a comfortable classroom and campus environment. Alfred (2003) suggested that colleges create “an environment that would provide opportunities for each learner to thrive, despite the culture of origin or the context of their location within the typology of the immigration experience” (p. 5). According to Roberts (2006), the research on student persistence “shows clearly that students who have set *specific* goals for their English language learning are more persistent than students who have a general goal of ‘I want to learn English’” (p. 2). Therefore, by vocalizing a specific goal of English language acquisition that may lead to acculturation into United States society, these ESL students set their goals high (Roberts, 2006) as they aim for a better understanding of what it means to be an immigrant military spouse in an educational setting within the United States. Like Tinto, Spann (2000) suggested that educators invest in the students’ cognitive and affective needs in one-on-one efforts. Both the

personal and financial costs are compounded each time a student fails and is forced to recycle through the education system, exits the program, and does not reach her learning goals.

Eisler (2000) reinforced Tinto's need for change by commenting that educational systems must change to "equitable, democratic, nonviolent, and caring" (p. 2) institutions. McClanahan (2004) offered a review of retention literature with a focus on what is effective in keeping students plugged into available programs. In fact, Eisler (2000) cautioned that without change, the persistence level exhibited within the human spirit becomes distorted as it strives to function within a non-conducive, educational environment designed by authoritarians. That mindset was appropriate for the industrial mentality, but it is unacceptable today within the field of adult education. Mojab, Ng, and Mirchandani (2000) explained that the field of adult education requires an overhaul to provide not only academic courses but lifelong learning for workers in an unstable and dynamic job market in a highly mobile, international community. Because many immigrant spouses have or will become members of the workforce, they will be expected to possess technical skills as well as English language skills.

Therefore, the focal point offered by educational institutions is the need for learning and training to meet the challenges at home and in the workforce where English language skills are required in both formal and informal situations. Thus, personal traits are important to English language acquisition and acculturation as these immigrants face additional challenges due to the transitory nature of military assignments and the military commitment. As their personal responsibilities increase, the probability for

students leaving the program also increases. Lucey (1998) warned that “lack of child care, health problems, a move to another area, and employer demands are the most common” (p. 3) situations prompting attrition. Likewise, Gabriel (2006) reported that approximately 62% of the respondents in his study did not return to the college because of life circumstances. As a result, the immigrants’ conflicts and sacrifices may overpower the desire for education and impact retention. In a down-turned economy with an uncertain future, unstable world events continue the need for military members on foreign bases as well as states all over the country. As a result, retention continues to decrease and offers additional opportunities for researchers to examine the specific barriers, especially for immigrant military spouses, that impact attrition and affect retention.

Gaps and Implications for Future Research

A need exists for additional exploration into the immigrant military spouse who has enrolled for English language learning and acculturation assistance in a community college adjacent to a United States military reservation. Current research does not adequately represent this population of immigrant women who arrive with divergent learning styles, dissimilar educational experiences, and different levels of self-efficacy, persistence, and resilience. More exploration of the experiences of active duty, military-related immigrant spouses enrolled in ESL programs in public community colleges within the United States is needed to assist them in their transition into the society of the United States.

Current literature also does not adequately address the external and internal forces that facilitate or hinder the acculturation process and how their participation in English language classes influence that process. According to Rudmin (2003), “when peoples of different cultures interact and intermix, they have some probability of adopting each other’s products, technologies, behaviors, languages, beliefs, values and social institutions,” (p. 1) which suggests that understanding their English language learning goals as well as the acculturation process serves to integrate the immigrant into the culture of the United States.

This immigrant group demands realistic and achievable educational goals (Moss, 2006) in a timely manner due to the nature of their needs and their desire for tailored language instruction. Supporting programs designed to offer English literacy skills continue to provide this group of ESL learners the language skills they need to function effectively in this new land of choice (Fitzgerald, 1995) and become acculturated into the society of the United States.

Conclusion

Within this chapter, an immigrant military spouse does not have English as her first language and desires to enhance her skills in reading, writing, listening, grammar, or speaking in an ESL community college program within the United States. For community colleges to maintain student enrollment in these programs, changes are needed to improved program quality, provide engaging classes for students, and institute instructional alignment to meet student expectations within a comfortable environment. To help “adults acquire the literacy and – in the case of ESL adults – the language skills

needed to function effectively in society” (Fitzgerald, 1995, p. 1), Haley (2004) suggested that educational institutions refocus the lens and take a closer look at these culturally and linguistically diverse learners by getting to know and accommodate them through a variety of helpful real-world strategies that specifically focus on English language acquisition. Because the retention and attrition rates have continued to impact institutions, it is important to recognize that in order to increase the retention rate, a meaningful English language curriculum is needed to interface with real-world activities to move immigrant military spouses closer to acculturation into the society of the United States and the workforce.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed three bodies of literature that included Acculturation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Retention Theory. These theories provided a framework to explore the experiences of active duty or retired, military-related immigrant spouses enrolled in ESL programs in a selected public community college in the United States. This study sought to understand and describe the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process and whether their participation in English language classes influenced that process.

With the number of immigrant students increasing on community college campuses, the fabric of the United States is changing. Because many immigrants perceive that English language acquisition is a vehicle for unlocking barriers toward their acculturation, educational institutions, which serve as a venue for offering opportunities for the complex English language acquisition, become tasked with

developing and providing programs. This suggests that the American Dream is realized through biculturalism and provides possibilities for easy transition into the culture and workforce of the United States.

In addition, this literature search identified and summarized studies relating to self-efficacy, persistence, resilience, and retention factors in a public community college English language program. Findings originated from an extensive search of books, articles, journals, ERIC, JSTOR, Dogpile, Alta Vista, dissertations, Google, MSN, MetaCrawler, and Yahoo.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and how their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

Crotty (1998) suggested that four factors intersect when developing research: (a) the epistemology, (b) the theoretical perspective, (c) the methodology, and (d) the methods. Epistemology is defined as a way of gaining knowledge of one's social reality by understanding life experiences through qualitative research. The theoretical perspective is a philosophical stance that guides the logic and the process of the research, while the methodology is the action plan, the design behind the choice of the method used to acquire knowledge. Methods are the procedures used to gather and analyze the data generated from a research question that drives the research and assists in constructing and interpreting meanings during an interaction with the world through the interviews. These factors served as the guide for developing this study design, for understanding the relationships of the research components, and for building the conceptual cohesiveness for researchers from other fields.

Methodological Framework

The methodological approach chosen for this study was a qualitative design. According to Gay (1996), the exploratory nature inherent within qualitative research is

ideal for exploring variables over time in a naturalistic setting. Meyers and Sylvester (2006) explained that qualitative research recognizes cultural variables that assist in understanding social phenomena. That concept is especially significant when exploring the immigrant population who is significantly influenced by their personal, military, educational, workforce, and community environments. Likewise, Gay (1996) and Ritchie (1998) suggested that qualitative research provides a more realistic setting, a better view into understanding one's perception of reality, and an appreciation of how people make sense of their experiences that influence their behaviors. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative research values the viewpoints of the participants with the purpose of understanding their personal perspectives. Since a community college setting and its students represent "a very rich and complex social structure that cannot readily be studied holistically by statistical means alone" (Bloland, 1992, p. 5), the qualitative design will allow the sharing of narratives by the military wives who are engaged in an ESL program while moving from immigrant into the society of the United States. Because this topic is minimally represented within the literature, the acculturation experiences of the immigrant military spouses provide empirical evidence into the external and internal forces as well as the military, community, educational institution, and the workforce that impact their movement into the receiving society.

According to Creswell (2006), there are five basic approaches to qualitative research that include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Moustakas (1994), credited with establishing the phenomenological approach,

offered the best method for an interpretive understanding of the experiences of immigrant military wives. Within phenomenological studies, data were collected from women who lived the experiences and were willing to share them. Thus, the basic interpretive approach offered insight into how the immigrant military wives made sense of a phenomenon through the major life event of marrying a military man and taking up residence in the United States. Utilizing the basic interpretive approach enabled these women to voice their experiences.

The Basic Interpretive Approach

Utilizing the basic interpretive paradigm is the best choice for understanding and interpreting others' worlds when it becomes necessary to explore them within their natural setting while reflecting upon "the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 42). Examining the human experience through an analysis of perception, cognition, and beliefs aided the researcher in capturing the essence of the acculturation experiences of immigrant military wives enrolled in an English language program at the community college level.

The basic interpretive approach, like the other qualitative approaches, does not differentiate between cultures, social groups, historical periods, mental types, or one's life history, but it does focus on an individual's point in time within a specific context. This allows for an interpretation of a person's experiences and interactions within her social world. Van Manen (1990) suggested that the essence of the experience is more significant than the facts told. Likewise, Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the research design "implies the presence of a continuously interacting and interpreting

investigator” (pp. 102-103). The basic interpretive approach, then, served to “explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 11) and assisted in understanding the external and internal forces that affected the immigrant military wife.

Riessman (1993) posited that “we cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret” (p. 8) and provides rich data and an understanding of the acculturation experiences of immigrant military wives. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2005) recommended that researchers observe the world as it is in “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). Thus, offering immigrant military spouses the opportunity to voice their experiences within the family, workforce, military, educational, and community college settings within the United States provided valuable insight into how they acculturate and offered the researcher the opportunity to construct meaning from their personal narratives. The use of the basic interpretive approach offered the most practical approach for understanding the needs, goals, objectives, challenges, and successes of immigrant military spouses as they acquired ESL skills in a community college in the United States as they moved toward acculturation.

Assumptions Guiding the Basic Interpretive Approach

Three basic assumptions guided the research process: (a) the researcher would be impartial and objective in the analysis of the data and the narrative, (b) the methodology proposed and described offered the best opportunity to explore variables over time in a naturalistic setting where and as the events occurred, and (c) the participants in this study

would provide examples of their external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process.

Role and Positionality of the Researcher

Important to a functional researcher is the dynamic interplay that occurs between the researcher and the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). During mutual interaction, Patton (1990) warned that the researcher must be able to detach or periodically withdraw from any preconceived notions or emotions before, during, and after the investigation in the effort to strive for neutrality to prevent bias. This indicates that the researcher remains objective and reflects only the viewpoints and feelings of the participants. Bloor and Wood (2006) suggested the use of an “audit trail” (p. 23) to monitor thoughts, reflections, and specific decisions made about the sample population, the site chosen, the interview questions, personal reflections, and resulting themes. Likewise, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that a qualitative researcher demonstrate neutrality during the research interpretations through an audit trail that consists of raw data, analysis notes, reconstruction products such as transcriptions, process notes, and personal notes. Therefore, an audit trail offers the reader the ability to trace the researcher’s logic to determine the trustworthiness of the inquiry. In addition, journaling served as a vehicle to organize my reflections, areas of concern, contact data, post-interview notes, and suggestions for improved time use during interviews. Within this chapter, I present a condensed version of the process and procedures I followed while preparing for and conducting the research.

Journaling served as my anchor and monitoring device to maintain my objectivity and adherence to ethical standards (Gay, 1996). In addition, discussions with peer reviewers helped me to maintain an impartial balance and to keep bias to a minimum. Inherent within the researcher's role is a brief explanation of how I was led into the world of immigrant military spouses and their acculturation experiences.

Researcher Background

For 24 years, I worked in a public high school in Texas, predominantly as an English teacher. During that time, I came into contact with international parents, immigrant military spouses, and students who desired English language assistance. Because my time was occupied helping the students and participating in volunteer work within the community, I was unable to assist the parents other than to refer them to the local community college that supported an accredited ESL program. At that time, I was hopeful the programs would be helpful to those who wanted to learn not only the English language but the norms of their new country.

Immediately after retiring from secondary education, I commenced tutoring students who lacked functional English literacy. I began to search for avenues to help them improve their English language skills and become more comfortable within the culture of the United States. I continued to refer the adults to the local community college ESL program, but I still did not have any specific information about their program, and I did not follow up to determine if the ESL program met their personal goals. During a religious celebration, I met several immigrant women who wanted to attend school to learn English but lacked the confidence to visit the community college. I

offered to accompany and help them become accustomed to the campus. To facilitate their comfort level, I became their recognizable face in the crowd by offering tutoring time before meeting the demands of the General Education Development (GED) students I met twice a week while employed in the Learning Resource Center on that community college campus.

As a result of the interaction with immigrant military spouses, I recognized that many of these women yearned to become members of their new home and needed assistance with English language learning to acclimate and acculturate into the culture of the United States. Therefore, while an intellectual goal for me has been to gain insight into areas that previous researchers have not fully addressed concerning the immigrant military spouse who moves to the United States, a practical goal of this research was to understand their abilities to withstand their external and internal challenges in their adjustment and acculturation and distribute that data to ESL educators at the community college level. This research attempted to determine whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

Ethical Standards

Ethics suggest that the researcher strive to maintain standards before, during, and after the research as mandated by the American Educational Research Association (Strike et al., 2002). This proposes that the researcher provide full disclosure of the nature of the study as well as solicit voluntary participation along with informed consent. In order to respect the rights, privacy, and dignity of the research population, I dedicated my attention to maintaining honesty, confidentiality, and anonymity. I informed each

participant prior to beginning the interview that I would maintain a conscious awareness of my position as a researcher and continually evaluate my standards as dictated by research ethics during and after the interviews.

Research Process and Design

The research design, according to Gay (1996), is the plan the researcher will use that includes the site selection, the pilot study, the participant selection, and the procedures for conducting the study. Gay (1996) suggested that the research design include thoughtful and informed decisions about “the most effective level of participation, the best way to proceed, what to observe, with whom they should interact, and the nature of the interactions” (p. 219) when involving human behaviors. Using the qualitative research design served as a vehicle to delve into the insights, experiences, and challenges immigrant military spouses face when moving to a foreign country, taking up residence, using a new language, and enrolling in a public, community college that requires functional literacy and fluency in order to move toward program completion.

Listening to their stories about their goals, experiences, and motivations to reach acculturation served to assist in identifying the recurring patterns in their family, community, military, workforce, and campus life experiences. Although many of these immigrant military spouses enter the community college with high levels of dedication, motivation, and persistence, some still face significant obstructions and situational barriers that affect their retention and create a bump in the road toward their English language acquisition and acculturation into American society. For others, the challenges only serve to reenergize them to move them closer to reaching their goals.

Site Selection

Rossman and Rallis (2003) posited that an ideal research site includes: ease of entry to the campus and program, an opportunity to build relationships with the staff and students, where ethical and political considerations are minimized, and where a cultural mix of participants exists. With these considerations in mind, I decided that a public community college in the United States that offered an ESL program would serve as an ideal research site because the purpose of the study was to explore the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered the acculturation of immigrant military spouses in an ESL program within a community college. In addition, community colleges serve a multicultural population of military spouses who enroll in programs that offer English language development through specific programs that bridge cultures and provide lifelines to tie immigrant military wives to their new communities of residence.

To establish a region, the locations of major branches of the U. S. military that support a large active duty population in the proximity of community colleges that offer ESL programs were reviewed. The south central region of the United States hosts a number of Army, Air Force, and Navy bases that accommodate a large concentration of immigrant spouses. Because there are few Marine Corps or Coast Guard bases, and the Navy bases support less than 5,000 active duty personnel, the Army was determined to be a more appropriate consideration for this study due to their larger numbers of personnel on active duty.

To determine a specific site, the numbers of immigrant spouses at the various military installations were investigated. The Fort Hood Army Base supported the largest

numbers of immigrant spouses representing widely different cultures. In fact, Fort Hood, the largest armored post in the United States, supports two full armored divisions and more than 40,000 active duty soldiers but did not offer a credit granting ESL program on the base. The closest ESL program, located off base, became an information-rich source for the study.

Located in the Southwest, this community college was established in 1965 on land donated by the Fort Hood military. On-site programs began in 1970 to service several counties, the military, and local community members that include retirees and their families. With the success of the programs, expansion has continued to include the Continental Campus, the Europe Campus, the Navy Campus, the Pacific Far East Campus, and the Service Area Campus. The current estimated enrollment worldwide is over 15,000 students, although only about 3,100 students attend full time.

Only a minimal number of immigrant military spouses enroll in English language learning classes within the ESL program on the Central Campus. The number varies from semester-to-semester, from approximately 250 to 550 students depending on spouse deployments and field training exercises (J. Anderson, personal communication, August 15, 2010). Two full-time employees and 12 adjunct faculty members facilitate the program that often provides small class sizes and allows individual attention. According to the ESL program secretary (S. Tello, personal communication, August 16, 2010), students from as many as 60 different countries attend for English language instruction, to develop job skills, to make friends, or to function better in day-to-day

living within the United States. Many of these women attend classes while their husbands are deployed to duty stations around the world, often in combat zones.

Prior to conducting the pilot study, I explained my research and secured the permission from the ESL program chair. Appendix B provides a sample of that communication.

Pilot Study

A means to gather rich data for qualitative research is through a pilot study to inquire about perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of a specific group of people (Byers & Wilcox, 1991) prior to the actual research. A pilot study offers the opportunity to pre-test a research instrument to determine if the instrument is inappropriate or too complicated. I assessed the feasibility of the study and my proposed recruitment approaches, and I tested the adequacy of the research questions since the research would be conducted in the English language with participants who did not have English as their primary language.

To engage interest in the research, I visited ESL classes for about ten minutes each to introduce myself, explain my research, and request student participation. I distributed a sign-up sheet for those who showed interest in participating in a pilot study that asked for not only their names but their phone numbers and email addresses.

The criteria for participation in the pilot study included: (a) must be an immigrant woman, (b) born and educated in a country other than the United States, (c) married to or divorced from an American military man, (d) be enrolled in the community college ESL

program or had attended in the past, and (e) be willing to share thoughts about the opportunities and challenges faced when moving to the United States.

Prior to initiating the pilot study, participants completed a consent form. A copy is located in Appendix C. The pilot study began with participants completing the pilot study questions as seen in Appendix C.

The discussion included nine women from the countries of Vietnam, the Philippines, Mexico, Panama, Egypt, Thailand, Russia, Haiti, and Peru who met for 60 minutes to briefly discuss their experiences with their transition to the United States and offer suggestions for additions or changes to the interview questions. The expanded meeting time allowed for reference to language dictionaries, electronic translators, and students interpreting for other students. From the pilot study, the interview questions were edited to eliminate confusing language.

Participant Selection

A qualitative researcher, according to Gay (1996), selects a small sample to generate information about a specific group. Within a qualitative study, the sample is “believed to be a rich source of the data of interest” (Gay, 1996, p. 214) and reflects the experiences of the larger population. The use of sampling for this research provided individuals who would “inform the researcher regarding the current focus of the investigation” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 172) in order to provide a representative population for this research.

Because qualitative research is intended to generate information about a particular group, the sample selection consisted of a purposive sampling of women who

had experience as immigrant military spouses. Prior to arranging any of the interviews, a total of 21 women who were enrolled or had been enrolled in the ESL program were willing to contribute to this study. Four of the women from the pilot study volunteered to participate. The additional women were located through the snowball technique and from recommendations of various ESL instructors. Because some women did not meet all of the criteria, they were excluded, which reduced the number of eligible participants to 14.

From the group of 14, I contacted the participants who volunteered to meet with me to discuss their experiences both as immigrant military wives and those who were in varying stages within the acculturation process. Participants were contacted by email to arrange a meeting time at their convenience. We met on the community college campus in a room provided by the ESL Department Chair.

Participants were asked to articulate their experiences as immigrant military wives while using the English language. Although they were provided the option for a translator, each woman chose to practice speaking in English and used a dictionary or electronic translator to find words as needed.

While setting up the tape recorder and securing a signature on the consent form, I asked the women to complete a demographic questionnaire that provided specific information about their birth countries, their husbands' time in service, reasons for taking ESL classes, and their future plans for utilizing their English language learning.

Procedures

Within the role of the researcher lies an obligation to adhere to the procedures mandated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Texas A&M University as well as the community college involved in the research. The procedures included four specific steps that enabled me to move from approval for the research to conducting the research: (a) obtain approval from the IRB to study human subjects, (b) secure permission from the institution to conduct the research, (c) engage the services of a translator/interpreter, and (d) establish precautions to maintain the propriety of the personal interactions through respect, beneficence, and equity (Creswell, 2003). After securing permission from Texas A&M as well as the institution where the research would be conducted, I took precautions to ensure that all participants were fully informed of the nature of the study and that dignity, respect, and kindness drove my personal interactions.

Since English was not the primary language of the participants, interpreters were recruited to aid in the translations. Locating an interpreter was not challenging for the Korean and Hispanic speakers, but for the Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, African, and Arabic speakers, I contacted several religious and community organizations as well as military units. I explained the purpose of the research and inquired about possible assistance with translations. Since the area around Fort Hood is culturally diverse, I had no problem locating volunteers to translate during the interviews.

Before the start of the data collection, 14 women completed a consent form designed to protect their rights and welfare before any data collection began. The forms also included information detailing what the study entailed and what the participants

would be asked to do during the study. The forms also explained that no benefits or compensation would be offered, and there would be no perceived or anticipated risks with involvement in the study. Also, any information about one's personal identity would be kept confidential, and all participation was strictly voluntary (Creswell, 2003). In addition, included on the consent form were the interviewer and committee chair contacts for additional information if desired (Appendix D).

The researcher serves as the primary data-gathering instrument in a qualitative study and is responsible for adhering to the research standards. The integrity and objectivity of the study began with a collection of demographic data prior to the commencement of the interviews that included their age ranges, birth countries, levels of education, the amount of time as an immigrant military wife, and their choice of a pseudonym for identification to maintain their confidentiality during the interviews. All participants were treated equally and given opportunities to ask questions and request clarifications or additional information.

For this study, the risks were minimal because participants were offered the opportunity to answer interview questions (Appendix E) with the option to participate and respond or withdraw from the research. No physical or psychological harm was expected or anticipated. Although some personal experiences appeared discomforting at times during the interview process, no harm resulted, and all participants voiced that ultimately they felt relaxed sharing their experiences as they practiced their English.

In addition, each participant received an information sheet at the completion of the interview that served as a reminder of the purpose of the research, my name and

phone number, and a restatement of my intent to maintain their confidentiality during my research process. They were also invited to meet with me after I transcribed their interview to add, correct, or modify any statements at their convenience.

Data Collection

The application of a qualitative design with a basic interpretive approach involved the collection of extensive narratives within a confidential reference. Since people create and associate their own meanings to their interactions within their worlds, the basic interpretive format allowed me to engage “in a dialectic and responsive process with the subjects under study” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 44-45) in the attempt to understand the meaning the participants shared through their narratives. This provided a rich data set that included the viewpoints of the participants who shared their acculturation experiences through interviewing as the primary mode of data collection.

Data collection was generated from highly structured personal interviews to maintain the integrity of the research questions and included a discussion of their English language and acculturation experiences as military immigrant spouses. To add to the depth of the data and to facilitate a wider data collection, open-ended, face-to-face, one-to-one interview questions provided the vehicle for in-depth data collection. Some of the topics included external forces such as the family, the military, the community college and internal forces such as persistence, patience, resilience, resourcefulness, and determination.

This method of data collection served to facilitate information about one’s experiences and thoughts that were not possible through observation or discussion in a

large group. The interviews were conducted in person as the women noted their preference for face-to-face interviews as a means to practice their English language conversational skills. Most of the interviews lasted for 90 minutes or more due to their constant checking for my understanding and their response time to process my questions. On several occasions, participants commented that they wanted to “practice English” and stopped to look up words that would help them overcome their lack of confidence as evidenced from “I not speak good English. You understand me?”

Moustakas (1994) explained that the interview should reflect a social conversation “aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere” (p. 114) to encourage participants to become relaxed as they describe their experiences. I attempted to create an atmosphere of confidentiality and rapport with the respondents (Moustakas, 1994) while conducting the interviews in order to make them feel comfortable sharing their personal experiences while practicing their conversation skills. To encourage them to feel confident using the English language, I gave them a copy of my interview questions prior to their interviews, allowed time for them to think about their responses prior to beginning the interviews, and explained that we would proceed at their pace. When needed, I turned off the tape recorder to give participants time to gather their ideas and search their vocabularies for the words that best explained their thoughts. I continually reiterated the availability of a translator; however, no one made that request. The interviews began with structured questions. To promote the serendipity of the interaction, time was allocated for respondent reflections prompted by unstructured questions. Each of the 14 interviews lasted from one to two hours on the community

college campus in a room provided by the ESL Department Chair. As they shared their personal stories, I took notes and made tape recordings.

This study involved more than simply situating research within a social context. It included the recording of participant beliefs and attitudes to provide for a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience within her social and cultural worlds. The sharing of experiences or situations not only enhanced the validity and credibility of the data produced but reflected the reality that was constructed by these women about their experiences within United States society (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) explained data analysis as making sense out of the data by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the data. To analyze the data, I followed Creswell's (2005) steps that offered a workable format utilizing six steps: (a) organize the data for a crude analysis, (b) thoroughly read through the data and construct a biographic profile, (c) code the data, (d) develop specific categories or themes, (e) present the themes through narrative passages, and (f) interpret the meaning within the collected data.

Step 1 – Organizing and Preparing the Data

To organize and prepare the data for a crude analysis, I transcribed verbatim each interview to preserve the authenticity of the narrative (Bloor & Wood, 2006) soon after each interview was completed. Transcriptions were challenging since English was not their primary language. Some words were mispronounced, used in the wrong context, or responses were laden with interrupters such as “uh, ok, well, in my opinion.” In addition,

some accents were more ethnic than others and made one word bleed into another that necessitated a constant reference to my notes to check for understanding as well as scheduling a quick meeting to validate the previous communications.

In order to maintain the flow of language in the responses to the interview questions, most of the disrupters such as “oh, ok, ah, um, well” in addition to breaks in the conversations have been removed to facilitate a focus on the content. This editing does not detract from the original intent of their statements.

Timely transcription was imperative to reduce the volume of narrative from each interview. Each transcription was coupled with my typed field notes to ensure that the resulting text best represented their responses.

Step 2 – Reading the Data and Constructing a Biographic Profile

I read and closely reread the transcriptions in order to acquire meaning and a sense of the whole experience in order to make general sense of the information as well as to reflect on the overall meaning of the narratives (Merriam, 1998). I made notes in the margins and underlined specific descriptions of the various experiences, such as the setting of the narrative, the actions of the participants, and problems with acculturation or relationships. I then created brief profiles of each participant that were short narratives about their backgrounds, adaptations to life within the United States, and experiences within the community as well as within the community college. These profiles allowed me to organize several of their responses to my interview questions in story form that personalized their narratives (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Step 3 – Coding the Data

Coding focuses on a massive amount of free-form data and moves from unsorted data to the development of specific categories, themes, and concepts. To analyze the data, I utilized three forms of coding. Open coding afforded me the opportunity to label words and phrases found in a sweep through the transcription. Through axial coding, I created themes and categories by sorting and grouping the codes and labels into words and phrases in a non-hierarchical manner. Through selective coding, I used a higher level of abstraction that gave the narrative its specificity through an in-depth look at the participants' responses.

To follow the idea of categorizing the data in the form of words and phrases to represent patterns as advocated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Guba and Lincoln (1981), I utilized words and phrases to represent patterns. I began the coding process by printing the double-spaced transcriptions, reading the transcriptions line-by-line, circling words, and highlighting phrases to look for patterns, word repetitions, topics, concepts, terms, phrases, and keywords, and labeling margin notes with one or two words. I searched for concepts that explained their experiences (Allan, 2003; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) and created themes and subthemes from the data. For example, I coded Young's difficult interaction with workers in the shoe industry under the category "workforce" and created a column for opportunities and one for challenges. I listed "discrimination" as the key word under challenges and then noted her example after a bullet. This information was later transformed into part of the narrative that summarized her experience in accordance with my understanding of her narrative (Auerbach &

Silverstein, 2003). I then organized the margin notes onto 3x5 cards with one card for each category or theme with specific examples.

To analyze the data, three forms of coding that included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were utilized to segment quantities of raw, qualitative data. The heart of data analysis began with the open coding process that involved data sorting and categorizing through words, letters, numbers, symbols, and patterns that captured the ideas and created a category (Babchuk, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002). For example, FE indicated a participant from the Far East, MCA included those participants from Mexico and Central America, and SAM designated those born in South America. In addition, if a participant mentioned any experience related to persistence, I marked the narratives with a large “P” and an “R” for any information relating to resilience. “RA” indicated a narrative reflecting racism, while “PR” specified prejudice.

I looked for ideas that stemmed from what each woman shared in her narrative. I listened for events, noted activities, personal feelings, consequences or constraints in activities, and any significant relationships or interactions with others that they described from an event or occurrence in their lives as they adapted to their new setting.

I maintained a master list of the categories and codes that were being developed from the first transcription and added to the list with new information from the subsequent interviews. I continued to summarize the data, organize the codes, and refine and revise the codes and categories while reviewing my memos and field notes where I recorded my ideas and insights to further condense the data into categories. From open coding, I began a second pass through the data and began the axial coding process.

Axial coding according to Moghaddam (2006), “is the appreciation of concepts in terms of their dynamic interrelationships” (p. 7) and aided in the creation of meaning derived from the narratives. Axial coding was my second pass through the data and focused more on the possible themes and subthemes that were organized around elements such as phenomenon, causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action strategies, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that these immigrant women experienced during their transition into the United States culture. Their desire for acculturation, the opportunities and challenges inherent within that goal, and the conditions that influenced these immigrant military wives to enroll in a community college ESL program were single categories that identified links and relationships between the narratives.

Within this step, I utilized enumeration to validate some basic categories by counting the number of times a word or phrase occurred in the interviews and checked these against the master list of codes and categories and revised or added as needed. I kept a running tally and updated as new information became available.

Selective coding, defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a data scan to integrate and refine the categories, allowed me to give the resulting individual narratives a deeper analysis and helped me frame their experiences (Moghaddam, 2006). During this phase, I reread the narratives, diagramed, and clarified the relationships between the categories that were within the data. For example, I developed categories that related to experiences within the workforce, the educational system, military life, and community involvement.

I then identified and summarized the events, external and internal forces, and actions that challenged or impacted these women.

Step 4 - Developing Specific Categories or Themes

Sorting the data into categories such as persistence, racism, and the consequences of specific actions, for example, provided a unique description of the women and events that shaped their lives. These categories were used to link the data that frequently appeared within their individual narratives.

From the categories, I identified three specific themes that included external and internal forces as well as personal transformation relating to the workforce, the educational system, military life, and community involvement. I then established subthemes for each theme to include racism, social networking, and cultural differences as external forces that impacted the women. Love and care, self-efficacy, persistence, patience, and resilience were examples of internal forces that the women shared in their narratives. Transformation included the resulting changes in their personalities, behavior, and their ability to functionally utilize the English language.

Step 5 – Presenting Themes through Narrative Passages

Following this step, I attached themes to specific narratives. For example, Young's feelings about being transformed from "the mud to a princess" demonstrated her appreciation for the opportunity to marry an American serviceman, leave Korea, and move to a country that provided her innumerable opportunities and a life of her dreams.

By identifying specific narratives, I was able to recreate the experiences related to the external and internal forces that led to their perceived transformation. From these

experiences, I better learned what meaning or significance events held for the participants, how they viewed their world, and what motivations guided their actions.

Step 6 – Interpreting the Meaning Within the Data

Following this step, I captured the essence of what the participants learned or experienced by focusing on the literal narrative, noting any non-verbal cues, gestures, or intonations transpired during the interviews (Hycner, 1999). I categorized the similarities and differences between the experiences of all the participants, finalized the themes, and re-contacted some of the participants for their comments about the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Quality Control

Quality control includes reliability and validity within a context-specific setting where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally” (Patton, 2001, p. 39). In order to maintain the trustworthiness of the data and to ensure that the essence of their experiences had been captured as communicated, peer reviews and member checks were utilized to ensure quality control.

Peer Reviews

A peer reviewer is “someone who is in every sense the inquirer’s peer, someone who knows a great deal about both the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Two reviewers who were instructors in both the ESL and English fields who had experience working with immigrant military spouses, English language acquisition issues, and had taken at least

one graduate course involving qualitative research were recruited to assist me with reviewing my data.

I emailed them two of the same transcripts and asked them to individually code the narratives based on their perceptions of the data. We met to discuss the coding, the resulting themes, and any variations in our interpretations. During the peer review process, which was conducted individually and lasted about 60 minutes each, I noted areas that differed from mine and asked for clarification. For the most part, the themes they identified were similar to mine; however, two of the subthemes differed, which we discussed. For example, both reviewers suggested that self-efficacy was more significant than resourcefulness, motivation, and self-determination as defined by Deci and Ryan (2006). Also, they both suggested that program improvement was less significant than the racism and the cultural difference issues. From the points relating to information shared by the reviewers that I had underrepresented during the transcription readings, I reordered the subthemes based on the recommendations of my peer reviewers.

Member Checks

To also establish quality control, a technique to establish validity was the use of member checks. Copies of individual interview transcriptions were made available, shared, and later discussed with the participants who requested a copy of the transcription. I solicited their comments, corrections, and provided feedback to ensure that their narratives were understood as intended. Four participants participated, and we met individually: the Korean, two from Colombia, and the Panamanian. Although the reading level of these women was higher than their speaking ability, I made a special

effort to clarify any areas or questions they encountered during the reading and took time to explain in detail to ensure their understanding. Although the language barrier existed, I occasionally used non-standard vocabulary to assist in progressing through the checks. Each meeting lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and varied due to the strength of their English language conversational abilities.

Member checks established credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) because the participants were provided the opportunity to correct inaccurate interpretations, to clarify any statements that appeared ambiguous, and to provide an opportunity for adding additional information if it proved necessary to expand any idea that was previously discussed during the interview. Modifications were noted and included in the data analysis. The member checks appeared to build rapport, which I believe, added to their confidence with practicing their English language speaking skills and sharing their experiences as immigrant military wives.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

In this chapter, I presented the methodology as well as the areas that guided this basic interpretive, qualitative study. The primary topics in this inquiry included the methodological framework, the role of the researcher, a description of the research

process and design, data collection, data analysis, and quality control that included peer reviews and member checks. Findings from this research are discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation and transformation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation into their community of residence and how their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

This research project explored and analyzed the perceptions and experiences of the immigrant military spouse through these following questions:

1. What does it mean to be an immigrant military spouse who is a speaker of a language other than English within the United States?
2. How do external and internal factors influence or impede the acculturation of immigrant military spouses into the wider society of the military and the community?
3. How do ESL programs at the community college level influence the acculturation of immigrant military spouses?
4. What external or internal factors do immigrant military spouses perceive as influencing or facilitating their retention within an ESL program in a community college setting?

The data reveal that both external and internal forces influenced the acculturation process, hence the intentional or unintentional transformation experiences of immigrant military wives. Moreover, English language acquisition was pivotal to that transformation. The external forces involved the community, workforce, military, and educational institutions. The internal or psychological forces involved love and care as well as self-efficacy, which included persistence, patience, and resilience.

This chapter is organized beginning with participant profiles. English language acquisition as central to their acculturation is then discussed, and the presentation of the findings addresses seven external forces that affected acculturation. These include: (a) the community, (b) racism involving discrimination, (c) cultural differences, (d) social networks, (e) the workforce, (f) the military, and (g) educational institutions. Within the two internal forces were love and care as well as self-efficacy illustrated by the personal characteristics of persistence, patience, and resilience. A result of the acculturation challenges was personal transformation that resulted from their internal control that helped the women in this study to adapt to the new environment and move into the receiving society.

The participant profiles illuminated the backgrounds and various experiences of the women who participated in this research. Information included their birth countries, age range, educational level achieved within their home countries, time spent living in the United States, previous employment, time enrolled in ESL classes at the community college, and the length of marriage to their military spouse.

Demographic Participant Profiles

Of the 14 women who relocated to the United States as wives of military members, Table 1 summarizes their demographics that are as varied as their personalities and experiences. Countries of origin included China, Colombia, Egypt, Honduras, Korea, Mexico, Niger, Panama, Thailand, and Vietnam. Two women were between the ages of 20-25, and two were between the ages of 26-30. There were four who fell into the 31-35 age range, while another four were between the ages of 36-40. Another participant's age range was among 41-45, while the last participant's age was over 51.

In terms of education within their home countries, one completed the sixth grade while five graduated from high school. Two had attended the university but did not earn a degree; however, four of the women received their college degrees, and two earned graduate degrees. In addition, their time spent living in the United States varied from one year to more than 39 years.

All but one of the women in this study had been employed prior to moving to the United States. Several women had owned their own businesses in their home countries. At the time of the interviews, only the Korean and Panamanian women had returned to the workforce full-time, while the others remained home caring for their families and working toward adapting to the military way of life within the United States. The others were in the process of gaining the skills needed to transition into the workforce. Often, their foreign educational credentials are not accepted by the educational institutions within the United States. As a result, some are forced to take, or they have taken, the General Educational Development (GED) examination to meet the educational

requirements of the workplace. Moreover, completing the high school equivalency examination makes them eligible for only entry-level positions rather than the skilled or professional positions some previously held within their own countries.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Name	Country of Birth	Age Range	Educational Level Achieved	Time Living In the USA	Previous Employment	Time Enrolled in ESL classes at this community college	Length of Marriage
Ana	Honduras	31-35	high school graduate	more than 6 years	self-employed; pool hall, bar	10 weeks	10 years
April	Colombia	26-30	graduate degree	1 year	dentist	5 weeks	3 years
Barbara	Niger	31-35	high school graduate	more than 6 years	teacher – elementary school	9 weeks	8 years
Isel	Panama	31-35	college graduate	more than 6 years	accountant	2 years	4 years
J.J.	Thailand	36-40	some university; no degree	3-4 years	1) shipping company office; 2) art gallery receptionist	1 year	9 years
Laura	Colombia	20-25	high school graduate	1 year	none	6 weeks	4 years
Lucy	China	31-35	high school graduate	3-4 years	business entrepreneur – owned own businesses	9 weeks	2 years
Mara	Mexico	41-45	college graduate	5-6 years	auditor for Mexican government	2 years	11 years
Missy	Vietnam	36-40	college graduate	5-6 years	print designer for magazines & newspapers	8 months	5 years
Nancy	Egypt	36-40	college graduate	7 years	music teacher	1 year	7 years
Rose	Thailand	26-30	high school graduate	5-6 years	bartender & student	10 weeks	6 years
Sophia	Colombia	36-40	graduate degree	1 year	financial manager	6 weeks	2 years
Suzy	Mexico	20-25	some university; no degree	1 year	medical receptionist	4 weeks	4 years
Young	Korea	51+	elementary school	more than 39 years	housekeeper for private company	2 years	39 years

Although the acculturation experiences that immigrant military wives shared during the personal interviews varied, there were commonalities in the experiences. From less than a middle school education to those with postgraduate work, these women communicated their sincere desire to make their international marriages work in unfamiliar communities within the military family in the United States. Despite their personal and professional training, they recognized the need for English language that would serve as a vehicle toward their acculturation and move into the workforce. They understood that without adequate English language skills, they would have to rely on others when their husbands deployed and left them behind to take care of the home front.

The following profiles offer glimpses into the backgrounds, motivations, and plans of 14 immigrant women for utilizing their English language skills to become acculturated into United States society.

Individual Profiles of the 14 Immigrant Women

Ana

Growing up in Honduras, Ana's family included seven children who lived comfortably on a farm within walking distance of a beach. Her father worked on a military base in town, so Ana heard English spoken but paid little attention to learning the language. Ana described the Honduras war and the bloody, civil unrest where children have been killed in the streets walking to or from school. Although her hometown is near the beach, away from the crowded cities, and relatively safe, Ana believes:

The United States a safer place to raise children, give opportunities for better education, no fighting, no wars. In Honduras, too much change. When a kid I living in a paradise, but things change. Crime. Violence. I will stay here, my home.

She and her boyfriend owned a pool hall, bar, and restaurant; however, when their relationship became tumultuous, they went separate ways. When she met an American military man, she considered moving to the United States to join him at his duty station, but she had three children from her previous relationship. It took three years for him to convince her that his feelings were sincere and that he would accept her children as his own.

She described her difficulty adapting to life in the United States. Fenced neighborhoods in a large community were new to her; as a result, she felt disconnected and isolated. Although she graduated from high school, when she migrated to the United States, she learned that to be eligible to work as a medical assistant required a GED. Without adequate educational credentials, she was halted from pursuing her dream job as a nurse. Her philosophy about life became obvious through her comment that, “when you find a struggle, you have to try figure it out and move on.” To transition herself into her new community, Ana enrolled in the community college to focus on English language skills, especially speaking and writing.

April

Originating from Colombia, April described life there as comfortable, with parents who believed in education and encouraged her to acquire a profession. She graduated with a degree in dentistry and worked for four years before meeting her husband and moving to the United States.

Her transition from Colombia to the United States delivered her several challenges. For example, after she took her driver's license test, she earned an "A." Greatly upset because she had studied and thought she understood the material, later she learned that an "A" in the United States was excellent. In Colombia, an "A" is only acceptable. Another challenge involved the cultural differences between Colombia and the United States. Christmas, birthdays, Thanksgiving, and Valentine's Day caused her confusion and laughter as she adjusted to the differences.

As a self-motivated woman and determined to achieve English language acquisition to hasten her acculturation process in her new home in the United States, April enrolled in a community college to advance her English language skills. She has been prevented from continuing her work in the dental field due to her foreign credentials. Despite her challenges, her basic philosophy is to live life like it is the last day because with a military husband there are no certainties about life.

Barbara

Barbara graduated from high school and was teaching elementary school before she married. Both Barbara and her husband are from the same town in a country in Africa, one of the poorest countries in the world. When offered a medical scholarship to train for two years in the United States military, her husband left Africa and became a naturalized United States citizen. They then married, but Barbara had to wait six months for her paperwork to be processed before she could join with him at his duty station.

Barbara related that her adjustment to her life in the United States was difficult because she did not speak any English. She only spoke French; therefore, she did not

attend military coffees, could not communicate with neighbors, and found shopping burdensome. She began to feel isolated and discouraged about her decision to move to the United States. She also explained that she had to modify her perception about life in her new home because in her country, Black people farm and White people live as nomads in tents. It was unsettling for her to grasp the mix in her multicultural neighborhood as well as to relax from worrying about the latest coup d'état that continually sent her country into political turmoil.

Barbara ultimately enrolled in a community college program to learn the English language so she “could fill her American life with good memories, put the English language learning to use, and work in health management.” When her husband completes his United States military obligation and earns his medical degree, they have discussed returning to Africa where he could share his medical skills with the people of their community while she teaches English.

Isel

From Panama, Isel graduated from a public university and worked as an accountant for a beer company. Because her brother and sister lived in New York, she spent time living between Panama and the United States. Previously divorced, Isel was not interested in remarrying. When she met a soldier, she worried that because he moved around a lot, he would have many women in different parts of the country and even the world. In addition, she already had two children, her own life, and she did not want to upset her status quo. When he met her children, he totally accepted them. This proved to

her that his marriage proposal was serious and he would become the husband she dreamed about.

Today Isel is not only a mother and a military wife but works outside the home. She also is a student within a community college ESL program, working to change what she believes is her “heavy accent as well as her English language reading and writing skills.” Although she has faced difficulty with her writing class and is currently retaking it for the third time, she is determined to persist until she passes the final essay and receives her certificate of completion for the ESL Program.

Isel described herself as self-directed, determined, persistent, and proud to be the role model for her children. She enjoys life in the United States despite some discrimination she has encountered in her workplace, but she is optimistic about her future and looks forward to being able to communicate clearly in English and not have to apologize for her “strong accent.”

J.J.

In Thailand, for example, J.J. explained that exceedingly high numbers of people live well below the poverty level. Unemployment and the lack of governmental subsidies have agitated Thai citizens who have resorted to civil unrest in the attempt to publicize their plight and to meet their physiological needs for food, medicine, and adequate shelter. J.J. shared her worries about how to keep her children out of danger when they visit family and friends because “in Thailand, very unsafe.” She prefers the quiet of her neighborhood in the United States where her children can play in the yard, be well-fed, clothed, and afforded opportunities for education that many Thai children are denied.

Married to a recently retired American service member, J.J. was born, raised, and worked in Thailand prior to her move to the United States, her dream country. Although she calls the United States home, she adheres to some traditions from her country, such as removing shoes before entering a home, visiting without making prior contact, cooking foods rich with pasta or rice with the whole fish, and practicing Buddhism and adhering to its precepts. Everything else is American from the car she drives to the clothes, jewelry, and perfume she wears.

J.J. enrolled in a community college ESL program for English language acquisition and the opportunity to learn more about the culture and customs of the United States; however, she has become disillusioned with the discrimination and double standard she encountered. Being dark-haired, she supposed that blonde females received more attention and preferential treatment from instructors within particular classrooms. On many occasions, her questions remained unanswered causing her to feel invisible and angry. She fully expected equality; that was her main reason for following her husband to this country. Despite that discontent, J.J. looks forward to becoming integrated into the work world in her new country and using her English language skills to develop and operate her own fashion design business.

Laura

Laura, like her husband, was born and raised in Colombia where jobs are difficult to find unless a person has a professional degree. Believing that there were more opportunities in the United States, her husband joined the United States military, became a naturalized citizen, and moved Laura to his new home adjacent to a large military base.

Although Laura graduated from high school in Colombia, her lack of English language proficiency prevented her from becoming gainfully employed in the United States. In addition, she constantly worries about her husband's upcoming deployment to Afghanistan and how she will converse with those who do not speak her language. She notes that she has made inroads with her English language development by participating in a community college ESL program, but she faced a setback by losing her baby at birth that caused her to delay her educational goals for a semester or two while she recovers.

Despite her English language challenges, Laura views herself as a growing woman. Understanding more of her new culture and the rights and responsibilities of a military wife have given her fuel to continue the journey toward making the United States her permanent home.

Lucy

Born and raised in China, Lucy's family consisted of three children and working parents. She graduated from high school and was working in Guam when she met and married her military husband and moved to the United States. As the only Chinese speaker in her husband's military group, Lucy quickly recognized that she must learn and speak English because her husband has orders to deploy to Iraq, and she has no family in the United States to help her while he is away. Because her school credentials have not been accepted, Lucy enrolled in a community college ESL program to enhance her English language skills in order to prepare for the GED test she will have to take before she is allowed to enroll in a college degree program. In addition, the laws and

regulations for licensing in the United States have hindered her from opening a beauty shop until she passes the certification examination that is given only in English.

In China, the authoritarian government prohibits freedom of speech and is intolerant of dissent in the press, assembly, association, religion, privacy, and worker rights. As a result, Lucy is happy to call the United States her home and never plans to move back to China. She has accepted the military life and enjoys her quiet, friendly neighborhood in a democratic country where living is unencumbered and offers personal choices.

Mara

Born and raised in Mexico, Mara graduated from the university and worked in the accounting field as a government auditor. When she became pregnant, she chose not to marry because she felt she did not “need money or a man.” After two years, she changed her mind. She felt her son needed a male role model; however, she immediately realized the error of that decision because their ideas about family life conflicted. At 28, his focus was on fun, and he refused to be active in raising his son. After a difficult tour in Germany, they moved to the United States. Mara related her experiences with having to apologize for her inadequate English when ordering fast food and the embarrassment she felt by drawing attention to her poor communication abilities. Because she has been unable to continue her profession within the United States due to her English language deficiency, she enrolled in an ESL program at the community college to work on her accent, grammar, and speaking in order to enter a training program for degreed individuals to become teachers.

Mara described her husband's initial disapproval about her learning and understanding English, and he has continued to discourage her reach for independence. Due to her husband's bad temperament, jealousy, and psychological and physical abuse, she is anxious to divorce him, become self-sufficient, and begin teaching Spanish to elementary or middle school children. With three children to support, Mara is determined to enter the United States workforce in the educational field and make this country her home.

Missy

From Vietnam and working as a print designer for a newspaper, Missy was familiar with the English language from the standpoint of grammar and writing, but she could not casually converse. Her insufficient oral communication became evident after her brother introduced her to an American military man and they attempted to converse over the Internet. Based in Arizona, he was half the world away from her, but he visited her as often as possible. Ultimately she became pregnant, but it took over two years to process her paperwork for permission to enter the United States. By then she had a baby son and 16 or 17 hours of flying time to reach the United States and her husband.

Missy recounted her difficulty in adjusting to her new home. The time difference prevented her from sleeping, so she walked around the apartment all night, which disturbed the other residents. In addition, her husband had to accompany her shopping and to doctor visits and attempted to translate for her. Because he did not speak Vietnamese, they often did not understand each other and caused friction and arguments, and she wondered if she had made the right decision to get married. She mentioned that

through her husband's patient cultural brokering, she became more comfortable with him and her new country. As a result, her personality transformed from that of a recluse to a more outgoing, friendly person. Currently, her husband is deployed to Iraq. She anxiously waits for his return, worried about his safety in a combat zone, and wonders what would happen to her if he were to become a casualty statistic.

Nancy

Nancy, an immigrant from Egypt, earned a bachelor's degree and taught for several years before meeting and marrying an American military man through an arranged marriage. Although she had some English language learning, she was not prepared for the total immersion and the resulting anxiety and isolation she would feel when she moved to the United States and became a military wife in an American neighborhood.

Because her husband believed that a wife should remain in the house, secluded from anyone who was not of the same religious denomination, she did not learn to speak any English and did not know anyone outside their Egyptian social group. After three years of active duty, her husband retired, became a contractor, and deployed overseas, leaving her to raise the children, take care of the household, and solve her own problems. Since she did not understand English past casual greetings, she felt cast into "a cruel world" when she received two speeding tickets within the first month as she was learning how to drive and did not know how to discuss the situation with the police officers.

She enrolled in a community college ESL program while her husband was away, confident that within a year she would be able to completely understand the language and feel comfortable interacting in situations such as the doctor's office, her children's schools, with car mechanics, and banking officials. Her course work and family obligations overwhelmed her; she developed insomnia and depression that led her to stop out of the program.

Nancy is currently going through a divorce and is invigorated at the thought of making all her own decisions. Today she is not someone's slave or maid as she had once labeled herself. For her, college became her life preserver and represented another world she desperately wanted to know. She has continued learning more English through movies, television, books, tutors, and friends, and for her, "that has made all the difference."

Rose

In Thailand, Rose graduated from high school and worked as a part-time bartender while attending college. Her friend introduced her to a military man, and her life made a dramatic change. After Rose married and came to the United States, her military husband deployed shortly after her arrival. Her in-laws helped her adjust by explaining the laws and customs and providing an accepting home. As a result of their guidance, she now understands the rigors of military life and fully supports her husband's decision to make the military his career. Although she worries about his next deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan, she remains confident that she will be able to handle the household, their son, and continue with her education. Her goal is to become

an accountant, but her lack of English language skills led her to a community college ESL program where she is focusing on accent reduction, vocabulary, and writing.

Rose explained that her faith in a greater force as well as a strong love for her husband keeps her thoughts positive before and during his deployments. She follows the Buddhist religion but admitted that the precepts were difficult, even though there are only five. Not hurting others specifically conflicts with her husband's job as a soldier, but that is his career choice, and she feels compelled to support his decision despite her religious turmoil.

Sophia

Sophia, from Colombia, earned a graduate degree that presented her the opportunity to work as a financial manager with a salary far above that of the average professional. She had a house, a car, and could vacation whenever she wanted; the single life was good. She often had to read and write in English as part of her job, but she faltered when speaking skills were needed and planned to attend classes to improve her English speaking capabilities. After she met and married an American military member, they moved to the United States where the English language would become essential as she learned to understand the community, the military way of life, and the demands made on her husband's time.

Sophia enrolled in a community college ESL program to begin her English language journey, especially in pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking. Her goal is to enroll in an American graduate management program that would give her the credentials

she needs to secure employment in the United States as well as contribute to the household.

As an advocate for a green Earth, Sophia is determined to share the message about taking care of the environment, but she hesitates due to her inadequate English language skills. She would like to make a difference in the world by ensuring that people and animals are fed and comfortable. Using the English language will, she believes, help her create that healthy world.

Suzy

Originating from Mexico, Suzy attended college but spent most of her time working as a receptionist at a clinic and swimming from four to five hours a day practicing for the pre-Olympics. Her goal has been to attend nursing school and teach weight training and physical conditioning through aerobics.

Marrying a military man and moving to the United States has caused her some adjustment difficulties. Boredom from being a full-time housewife, needing a GED to enroll in a degree-seeking program, and her inability to fluently communicate in English with her neighbors and the members of her husband's military unit have caused her distress. Her inability to correctly pronounce words as well as an inadequate vocabulary motivated her to enroll in a community college ESL program. She believes that dedication to her goals will serve as the impetus for her to continue her English language learning and help her become more familiar with the culture of the United States and the military as she learns to become self-sufficient and struggles with the advance of her husband's deployment.

Suzy explained that America is now her home because the chaos brewing in Mexico between the police and the drug lords has been unsettling. She confided that violent incidents are increasing, and innocent bystanders risk falling victim to gunfire at any time of day or night. She shared that some soldiers like to visit Mexico to attend parties; however, a person who is affiliated with the United States military cannot cross the border due to the crime in Mexico. Suzy shared that “if my husband cross the border, he be arrested by American police. Life is no good in my town. Ten people dead now. Better to stay here.”

Young

Young lived in a Korean farming community surrounded by rice paddies and no close neighbors. Growing up in the 1960s, her house was constructed of mud and hay with rice plant leaves as a roof covering and a dirt-packed floor. There was no plumbing, and the closest well was at least a quarter of a mile away. The winter months brought desperation because her mother became the sole breadwinner of the family due to her father’s many illnesses. Often there was no heat or food, and minimal clothing warded off the winter chills. Young felt these challenges only made her a stronger person. At an early age, she learned to work hard on the farms during planting and harvesting. When winter came and the farming jobs became scarce, Young volunteered to help women wash clothes in the creek in return for potatoes, other available food staples, or fire wood.

Because her mother wanted her to earn money caring for other children, Young dropped out of school in sixth grade. Later when she married an American serviceman

and moved to the United States, her goal was to learn how to live and work in her new country that she ultimately realized would be challenging due to the discrimination and racism she felt being married to a White man.

Young also recounted an attempt to become familiar with her new community. She had never interacted with people from different ethnic groups before in her small, farming community. She was confused about American neighborhoods that were segregated as well as the language differences that existed between the different groups. It was difficult for her to communicate in an Italian butcher shop, an Irish pub, a Jewish delicatessen, or a French bakery, all within the same community. She shared that she felt isolated within the community because she did not fit into any of the ethnic groupings; she was the only Korean married to a White man in the town. Young explained that even children in the community would call her “Chink.” She shared, “I don’t know what that mean. Chink. As I think back, life in America changed over the years; become much better for immigrants.”

Due to her lack of English language skills, she enrolled in a community college ESL program to learn the basics of the English language. Young explained her transformation from the “mud to a princess” with her husband’s help, crediting her ability to persist and adapt to life in the United States from the common sense she learned from her poverty coupled with the love and support of her husband.

The profiles provided an overview of some of their experiences and challenges en route toward acculturation and their subsequent transformation into biculturalism. For several of the women, their external and internal challenges made them stronger women

and ignited the desire to learn the English language as a way to become acculturated into the society of the United States.

Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences and transformation of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their transformation and acculturation.

Nine broad themes involving external and internal forces were found to capture the transformation and acculturation experiences of the military-related immigrant wives who were represented in the study. The external forces included the community, workforce, military, educational institution, racism involving discrimination, cultural differences, and social networks. The internal forces included love and care as well as self-efficacy, manifested by persistence, patience, and resilience.

When asked to share some experiences as immigrant military wives living in the United States, these women described the external and internal forces that led to their personal transformation. They were eager to tell how and when they met their husbands, about their move to the United States, learning the English language, enrolling in and attending ESL classes within a community college system, and stepping out of their comfort zones to face personal changes within the community, workforce, military, and an educational institution. In addition, the women in this study shared that English

language acquisition was the compelling factor that led toward their acculturation and movement into biculturalism.

Central to the acculturation process was English language acquisition that was found to be an essential element to adjustment into the society of the United States that led to their acculturation and transformation. For them, speaking English was necessary to move out of the home and into the community, the workforce, and an educational institution. In addition, understanding the English language afforded them opportunities to interact with other spouses within the military community.

English Language Acquisition as Central to Acculturation

To be a speaker of a language other than English in the United States has been challenging for these immigrant military spouses. For the women, English language acquisition has been the pivotal point for acculturation as well as social learning and movement into the community. Even though some had limited English language skills, they often felt isolated, stuck at home, and alone without the ability to converse in more than simple greetings or with gestures.

English language acquisition was a primary concern for these women, not simply for the purpose of acculturation into society within the United States, but for educational programs, the workforce, economic development, or social needs outside the family. In particular, English language acquisition was necessary for communication with their military husbands. Of the 14 participants interviewed, none spoke fluent English prior to their marriage to the American military member. The majority of the women never dreamed they would meet and marry someone from another country, so they busied

themselves with their education and careers at home and found little need to study the English language. The decision to marry an American and move to the United States brought challenges that would test many immigrants, while others simply readjusted their priorities and began to focus on learning the English language.

When asked about her decision to marry an American service man who did not speak her language, Suzy described that decision. She admitted that learning English was a challenge, but she readily accepted it to begin life with her man in a new country.

As Suzy shared:

My decision that I take is it was hard decision because when he asked me if I wanted get married I have to think to leave school, my job, my family, friends, and it was a little hard because I didn't speak English good, but it was hard because he's in the military and I have to think about leave my family and my house.

Similarly, April described her situation as well as her determination to make her relationship work after she decided to begin online communication with her spouse in the United States who spoke no Spanish. She explained:

When I meet my husband, ok, in the first moment my cousin be with him about me. He say no, she's in Colombia. And she don't speak English. He doesn't interested in a relationship with a person that is far to him. And my cousin speak with me, and I say the same. He is in United States. He speak English, I no speak English. But in the second opportunity when he spoke with us I say we can try. We were online, and we say go ahead and speak and try to learn. His learn Spanish and English and we have conversation. 15 minutes and we spend like 2 to 3 hours for the characters in the computer and trying to use translator. With this first conversation, we started our relationship. Like every day we be online like 2 to 3 hours and we fall in love at this moment.

When asked how she had planned to work through the language challenges now that she was in the United States, April explained that the community college would teach her the rules of the English language. She mentioned that she would continue to practice with

her husband until she could communicate clearly with him without a dictionary or translating equipment:

I don't think so that this is a problem when you feel love with another person to enjoy the time with this person. You try to find words, the way to say whatever you need to say, so I don't think so that language is – sometimes it is a little difficult, but it is no a problem or a *barrera*.

Young, on the other hand, recognized early that as a new mother and the wife of a soldier on the battlefield, learning English was an absolute necessity. She was left behind to take care of the household while her husband went to war, giving her feelings of hopelessness and despair. She commented that she almost did not make it through the challenges of being a new mother, a military wife married to a White man, and living in the United States with no friends or family. She worried that if something happened to her husband, she would be unable to interact in the culture she called home. She stated:

So, even though I was young, if something happened to my husband in Vietnam, I'm pregnant. I don't know English, how am I gonna raise my son? So I started get myself up and memorized vocabulary from the grocery packages or cans or whatever.

Yet, learning English was a slow process because her attention was diverted by postpartum depression while her husband was deployed. She explained her treatment and how she dealt with her lack of language skills. Young stated:

After a while I was suffering to, I don't know what you call it, when a woman has depression after a baby. I had that, and I almost killed my son. So I was in Johns Hopkins Hospital, mental hospital, one month to give me help. They give me medications, and even though my English poor, I tried to describe as much I can like you know. But only way the doctors can evaluate me good I have to tell him how I feel. You know, without me telling he cannot give the right medications. So I tried emotion. I tried to explain how. Almost 19. Like I become blind, deaf, mute. You know. Handicapped. Everything.

As each interview concluded, it became evident that learning the grammatical structures, vocabulary, idioms, and tense usages in English appeared overwhelming but was a necessity toward acculturation into United States society. After I told them that the English language has a composition of about 80% foreign words that makes the language challenging, they confided that they would practice as hard as needed to learn and retain the language. Missy shared:

Learn speaking English better, and learn to write in and speak English better. And maybe help my children with their homework. And to get a job later too. Work on accent reduction, increase listening skills, increase vocabulary, work on TOEFL test, preparation for transfer to academic program, talk my neighbors and community friends, able discuss medical or legal problems with experts.

If it took a year, two years, or more, each woman vowed to move ahead one step at a time until effective communication in English with their husbands and children became easier and the navigation through the American culture less confusing. April explained:

She needs put all her attention to speak the language because sometimes no easy to speak the same language that the people speak in this country. Ok. Say if she love her husband, she will prepare to be ok in all this new country to continue her new life.

To become an American citizen, the English language is necessary to integrate into the culture and the workforce. Isel remarked, “Better English is better job.” Suzy explained, “I want learn more English and try speak better I can get good job and go to college.” They agreed that the English language enables conversation with family, friends, teachers, salesclerks, doctors, lawyers, and husbands. Missy clarified:

When we come here, the first year was very difficult because I’m new. I’m not speak English. I don’t know anything. Anytime I went to see doctor, he need follow me and translate. And sometimes you know he say something and I didn’t

understand what it mean. And we keep fighting with like personality like because we not the same language.

On the other hand, Mara reflected that she has to communicate for herself and not rely on her husband or children: “They don’t help me. If I say something wrong, they don’t say anything. When we get at home then they tell me. They speak Spanish at home. They don’t speak English.”

Language is also needed to feel a part of a class, the college, the community, the church, and with their families and new friends. Laura rationalized her need for the English language:

I need to get a job. I want talk to other people very well. I need learn English so I can learn speak to my husband’s friends in English. I no understand them. I want care for old people.

The English language allows them to advocate for themselves in formal and non-formal settings with or without their husbands. Becoming competent in the language means an identity with and membership in their new society. Without English they shared that they felt lonely, disenfranchised, and as J.J. stated, “like a person with no shadow in the bright sun.” Those were feelings that made her feel uncomfortable, but as Nancy shared, learning the language had a positive effect on her self-esteem:

I’m different. I improved a lot. I was home before, but isolated. Alone. That was painful. Now I have life. I can think by myself. I just don’t want to fail. I’m trying hard to learn. I’m willing to learn, willing to change, and I will work hard. I will strive all my life.

Like Nancy, the other participants indicated their dislike of isolation as a result of their English language deficiencies. Without the language skills, life was confusing and

challenging. To them, the English language was the bridge between their present and their future. J.J. clarified:

I do most anything with the right words, but I need know the words. Without words I'm a car tire with frozen water. I cannot move ahead. Here I talk English to my son's teachers, my teachers, my American friends, friends from everywhere.

English language acquisition is perceived as the key to opening their door of opportunity, not only for the business world but for personal communication as well.

Lucy shared:

If you can do English good, you can do anything you want. If you cannot speak English, you have a very hard life. It's very important. Here I'm a housewife. I don't work. Sometimes like time is slow. I just watch tv, learn English. Sometimes I want to do something. It's hard. I can't do it. So I feel very sad. Can't do things because laws and regulations problems. Must learn to speak English to get ahead.

By learning English in a community college classroom, these immigrants stated that they enjoyed meeting, sharing ideas, and opinions with women from different countries. Nancy summed up her experience by commenting that:

To make friends is very important, to have people support you, not just your husband because he is usually he's not, he's busy all the time. On campus I met a lot of different cultures, different students, and I think I got most friends from there. It's a very good, positive because before I didn't know a lot of people.

They shared that they felt bound together by being military wives with the common goal of learning the English language and moving toward acculturation into the society of the United States. Thus, English language acquisition, according to Nancy, was her life preserver:

I love English learning, but it's not easy. It's not easy to change. But I feel I'm different. Since I went to community college until now, I improved a lot. I learned a lot. I remember a lot of times when I go down, I go very down, I have

teachers and friends they help me to see one different to me to make me continue and don't give up at all. And it helps me a lot, and it's very, very important to learn English.

English language acquisition, then, served to empower immigrant military wives to acculturate into the wider society of the community, workforce, military, and educational institutions. In addition, English language acquisition has opened the door for their acculturation into United States society, and ultimately, helped the women in this study transform into citizens of their receiving country.

External Forces and Acculturation

Within the study, the community, workforce, the military, educational institutions, racism involving discrimination, cultural differences, and social networks were identified as external forces that provided both positive and negative experiences to immigrant military spouses. Within these external forces were subthemes that included social networking and tended to elicit more positive responses during the interviews. The educational experiences and racism within the workforce and within some communities prompted negative responses to surface. In addition, cultural differences were viewed as opportunities to become familiar with women from countries around the world but also highlighted some dissimilarity that created occasional conflict between cultures.

In the United States, people generally have the freedom to make choices about the community they choose to reside in, their employment and education, as well as how to provide for the safety of their family and friends. Yet, in some countries, those choices have been eliminated and present a significant contrast to life in the United States. For the women who have followed the news in some of their countries, the

unrest, conflict, fighting, and poverty have reinforced their belief that the United States is their land of opportunity. By becoming a citizen and acculturating into the community, the workforce, the military, and educational institutions within the United States, the women have been afforded choices that for them have significantly impacted their lives into the community, society, the military, and life obtainable in the United States.

The Community

Living within a community surrounded by a military base has brought multiple cultures and languages into the neighborhoods. For several of the women in this study who found themselves isolated from others as a result of language differences, their adjustment has been challenging. Laura reflected:

The people in Colombia is that much people outside in the street. They walking, and I stay here in the United States, no people walking the street. I can't move when I don't have a car when in the United States. And in Colombia I move or I take the bus, taxi, and here, no. I have to drive. I learned to drive. I need a car to go somewhere, to eat, school, church, friend's house.

Another example was shared by Lucy. When she lived in China, she believed that the American people were friendly. Yet, when she arrived, she quickly realized that “many times, if I don't know you, I don't smile to you. I live here. I just manage sometimes.” In addition, Isel shared her realization that some Americans tend to stereotype particular ethnic groups and establish barriers within the community. For example, she commented:

I want to do everything the same as I do in my country, but I can't. You have to deal with other people, but you've moved out your group. It's hard. I don't know English. Sometime people try to pull me down.

Likewise, Sophia commented that she felt isolated from her neighbors and stated that “they no consider about the others. He doesn’t matter what happen his neighbor.” In addition, Barbara shared that the United States is too quiet. She had been “staying at home, doing nothing. Nobody speak French. I nobody to talk to. Neighbors don’t speak me.”

Within the community, both Ana and J.J. revealed that interaction with others was challenging due to their inability to enunciate their English clearly and others’ stereotypical behaviors toward immigrants. Ana commented, “Talking to other people is a challenge, so that was hardest part for me to adapt. I don’t like how people judge by how people look. We are same, only look different.” Likewise, J.J. remarked that she became impatient with others who appeared intolerant of her, were quick to evaluate her based on her ethnic origin, and were unwilling to communicate and learn more about her. J.J. shared:

I don’t like when people say huh or what to me, you know. And look at me funny, or laugh at me. I don’t like it. I don’t like how people think they know everything. She just look one side. She thought she knew everything, but she didn’t see.

Similarly, Lucy found it unusual that elderly men and women in the United States were still working in restaurants, department stores, and schools and were not home tending their gardens. She stated:

China requires early retirement. 48 to 52 years because the large population who work in factory or office. Restaurants and hotels only have young people. Never see old people work in China. When get old, stay in house and be happy.

Despite their language deficiencies, the women in this study believed that fences separated neighbors more than language differences and prevented more frequent

interaction. For them, acculturation would not originate within their communities until neighbors made a concerted effort to interact with each other. In addition, without community programs such as organized block parties or community festivals, neighbors would not meet each other because many choose to remain detached. Nancy felt that the community has a responsibility to know its citizens and create programs to involve them.

The acculturation challenges the wives shared during the personal interviews were varied; yet, the common thread was their belief that the community could facilitate their acculturation through available programs. Despite their optimistic outlook about life in the United States, however, an external force of racism that includes prejudice and discrimination has challenged several of the women within not only the community but the workforce and the educational institutions as well but has not affected their determination to acculturate into United States society.

Racial Discrimination Within the Community

Although racism continues to cut across all the external forces, it became obvious during the interviews that racism had become a specific challenge for a few of the women. Because integration has not always been easy for the immigrant women who moved into new families, communities, and the workforce within the United States, Young, in particular, felt disorientation and confusion in her new environment by what she saw and heard people do when she moved to the East Coast in 1975. Racism, which includes prejudice and xenophobia, were unsettling experiences. Young confided:

I have a difficult time to deal with the people who use racism. I don't have education, so I have to work low level in the kitchen as a dishwasher or in factory work or as janitor. Many people don't like me cause I marry White. They tease me. They say curse words to me. I don't know what they mean until I ask my

husband. They steal my towels at work. They hide it to make me trouble. They make me mad, but I cannot complain. I'm the only Korean. One day they call me a bad name. I say you call me bad word, and I call you one. So they report me. They fire me! That a big problem.

Isel shared that she also felt prejudice and discomfort in her workplace that she believed stemmed from racism. She commented that she has always been aware of her abilities as well as her limitations and felt that even though she spoke Spanish, she was not inferior in any way:

I have one experience at my job. She tell me, excuse me, why you speak Spanish? Why don't you go back your country and speak your language better? That day I don't close my mouth. I respond to her. I say she can't tell me I cannot speak Spanish because this is racist. I speaking with my Spanish wherever I go, whenever I working. And that day the girl tell me you defend yourself? I say, yes. I tell myself no matter what, nobody tell me when to use my language.

In addition, problems surfaced for Young as a result of her bicultural marriage.

Discrimination became prevalent not due to her lack of work ethic but because she married a White man that conflicted with the norms of the community where they lived.

She shared:

I work extremely hard than other people. For example, maybe White lady sew 1,000 tennis shoes. I have to sew 3,000. With a girl who doesn't speak English, married a White man, they give me all kind of trouble. They don't like me cause I marry White. They tease me.

Similarly, Nancy revealed her dismay when a job offering became a challenge to her religious beliefs. She shared:

I can't find a job. One place, they asked me to take off my scarf. I can't understand. I can't do a job good with my scarf? They told that people are scared of the scarf. I think they think I'm terrorist. I said I'm human like everybody else. I didn't take off my scarf, and I didn't get the job.

Although movement into the United States workforce has been challenging for Young, Isel, and Nancy, other women in the study also felt racism, discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance directed specifically toward them in the military, the community, and within the educational institution. Despite incidents of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, these immigrant military wives voiced their desire to move forward into United States society by learning the English language, moving into the community, the workforce, and supporting the missions of their husbands despite cultural differences within the troops and their families, the community, and the educational institution.

Cultural Differences Within the Community

Culture incorporates the beliefs and values of experiences that shape an understanding of the world. Through observation and interaction, similarities as well as differences contribute to understanding and accepting diversity and the nuances of life in the United States. Some military immigrants have embraced the differences and adapted, while others hold to the known and comfortable. Accepting the cultural differences in conjunction with learning the English language has affected these non-English speakers who wish to move into the culture of the United States. Additional elements that required negotiation were foods, cultural interactions, and family connections that challenged their understanding of the cultural differences between their home countries and that of the United States. Adaptation to foods, in particular, was cited as a challenge due to the adjustment needed to become familiar with the traditional American fare of red meat and potatoes.

Foods

Across the cultures, similarities exist in food but include many different types of preparations. For example, noodles and rice dishes vary with the spices utilized to flavor the food. For example, Pad Thai includes fried noodles with vegetables and chicken or shrimp and is often spicy hot. Vietnamese noodles, on the other hand, are generally mild and mixed with a variety of vegetables and beef or chicken. Because noodles are not considered a staple in the traditional meat and potatoes diet of many people within the United States, some military husbands ask for meals without noodles or rice. This has caused some friction within the household. As J.J. asked, “Do I cook for him or me? Who will have to change?”

According to Nancy, rice is a staple in her country. Differences include white or brown rice and whether the rice is fried, boiled, or baked. Since rice, for example, was not part of her husband’s diet, introducing him to the change in fare was challenging. As she stated, he prefers food the “way his mother cooked and wanted nothing new or different.” Her husband would not eat the foods she prepared unless the taste and texture were familiar from his childhood. For Nancy, she struggled to make him happy during dinner. She attempted to compromise, but it was never enough to keep him content. She often ended up crying while working in the kitchen.

Laura quickly recognized that if she did not want to spend much of her life in the kitchen, she had to try an assortment of multiethnic foods available in her community. Since no local restaurants served Colombian food, she admitted that she enjoyed the variety, but she did not want to forget her family custom of serving Colombian food for

family dinners and special gatherings for friends. Laura recounted some differences she noticed between her culture and the American way: “Food different. We eat more beans.”

Missy related her story about the purchase of a cookbook and her first challenging attempt to cook American food to please her husband. She explained:

I don't know how cook American food, so I buy the book. Read it, and learn everything. The first time I look at recipe, I cook big. I put 2 spoons for how many pounds to do it. I look recipe. I cook a lot. My husband he doesn't like food left, so he finished eating this food. I left with eating all that food by myself. Also, if he doesn't like the food, he doesn't eat it. I tried. I learned to use measure. It took practice to cook American food. Now I'm good. I'm change in my cooking.

Lucy, from China, shared that she has enjoyed living in the United States and is anxious to learn more about the culture of the United States, especially the food. She commented: “I like some of America culture. I try any country. Different food. I want to try something new. I want to learn something new too. I want to learn American culture.” For Lucy, her husband has served as her cultural broker, always willing to listen, teach, support, encourage, and assist her during that transitional time from newly arrived immigrant to United States citizen. He has taken her to many different restaurants where she has sampled food from around the world, and he introduced her to a number of people within the community and his workplace in the attempt to familiarize her with his country and make her feel at home when he deploys.

The decision to come to the United States has been challenging for some women due to limited ethnic food selections available in restaurants within the military community. For those women who desire a particular food, they often make two meals

at home. Some eat in the kitchen while they prepare their husbands' meals to prevent arguments about meal choices.

Food, however, is not the only cultural difference noted within this study. Family interactions, family connections, the celebration of holidays, and the home settings differed between the husband and wife, which have sometimes made acculturation a challenging process.

Family Interactions, Connections, Holidays, and Home Settings

Attempting to unite two different cultures within the same household has presented its share of challenges for the bicultural couple. When the norms for interaction differ between the cultures, confusion often occurs prior to adaptation. When asked to cite a significant difference between the culture of Thailand and the United States with reference to family interactions, J.J. stated:

In Thailand, the family comes over any time. In America we must call first, but we can still be Thai and live our culture. We take off our shoes. No shoes in the home. Leave them at the front door. People don't always understand. We respect our homes; but we love our family and friends more. We talk and eat. Then talk and eat more. No hurry. We learn how I expect people in my home to be. No TV. I make Thai food, not fast from box or restaurant. My friends are important to my life.

Sophia found the differences in family connections difficult to adapt to in the United States. She has often felt isolated here because her family members and neighbors mostly keep to themselves. This is a sharp contrast to life in her country where everyone interacts, shares meals, and knows all the family members from the oldest to the youngest. Life is a bustling, noisy time, while in the United States there is quiet. Sophia shared:

I think it is difficult for me to understand the United States. The family is when most people spend more time alone. Many people do not take time to spend with their families. I think that there is much individual, and we begin to lose the family. For example, here you no worry about the other people when you are concerned. They no consider about you. Each person is alone, and only he is worried about he. He doesn't matter what happen his neighbor or somebody. I think that can help make to better world if the people live his or her own life, be a little worried, concerned about the others, so they can help the world.

Similarly, Missy described her surprise at how nonchalant Americans were about dating foreigners, especially through the Internet. In her country, to interact with a foreigner brought social stigma to the family from the community members, especially if the Internet was part of that process. Missy disclosed:

The culture different because Vietnamese world before if you get married with foreigner they look at you. They think you the bad girl. We don't want somebody know I will get married with foreigner. I didn't tell my family. Only my mom know about this. No auntie, no uncle. Nobody know I had date with him. I hide that too. The first time that he send the flower for me, I hide. I say, oh, this my birthday. I don't want somebody know about this.

Furthermore, April shared that different customs, which include family traditions and cultural interactions, between Colombia and the United States exist especially during the Christmas season. Because she enjoys learning about and celebrating holidays in the United States, she stated:

I think that we have many different customs. I like to learn the culture of my husband. He likes to learn my culture. He tells me how things are here. I tell him the things in Colombia. We share; we share many different things like Christmas, New Year, different special days, holidays. I feel comfortable learning these things. Some moments I think, this is a strange, but I like it. We are learning together. Like Christmas, for example. In Colombia, Christmas is the 24th. You stay up all night and open presents at midnight. You have a big family dinner before 12 or after 12. You dance. You drink. My first Christmas in the United States last year I was sleeping all night. In the morning here the people say Merry Christmas. We say Merry Christmas at midnight.

April and Sophia also noticed a significant difference between the Fourth of July in America and Independence Day in Colombia. Here people use red, white, and blue to represent the flag of the United States, while in Colombia on July 20 there is no color theme. April commented:

I say this is nice. I like shoot fireworks. America. I like it. The last year I don't use nothing like the color of the flag, but I want use to try to use the colors. This is new for me, and I like it.

The birthplace settings of the women ranged from affluence to poverty and offered a glimpse into their lives prior to their marriages to a United States service member. For example, Lucy noted that her country of birth differed greatly from life in her new home in the United States. She explained that the Chinese communist government instituted many rules that deprived people of personal choices. She remarked:

No freedom of speech in China. America, I'm thinking, really quiet, and people are friendly, and you go somewhere and can buy something. Lot of people love to help you. In China, the people different. They know laws. Too many people. Rich and poor. No else. No freedoms.

Young felt awed when she came to the United States and noted how the houses in her neighborhood differed from where she had lived as a child. Even though her military husband earned a modest salary, she was more comfortable than she had ever been before in her life, which made her feel like a princess. She explained: "In Korea, my mother's house built by mud, mixed with mud and hay. To get water, had to walk a part of a mile to the well. America is like going to heaven." Young explained her feelings about being given the opportunity to marry a good man, come to the United States, and begin a life of opportunity. She also commented that she had to learn the

behaviors that were acceptable and expected of her. Once she understood, she adhered to them to prevent any misunderstanding of her motives or actions and “learned how American and not be Korean.”

Even though the cultural interactions, family connections, holidays, and home settings differed between the various cultures, the women in this study enjoyed the contrast and were excited about learning more about the United States. Because their home settings were markedly dissimilar, they contrasted their home settings to how they live today.

Participants indicated that cultural differences required adaptation to food, cultural interactions, family connections, and home settings. Only through the ability to utilize the English language did they feel that movement into the culture of the United States and the workforce could become a possibility with acculturation as a reachable goal. Within the workforce were challenges that highlighted the adaptations, transformation, and changes required to integrate into the workforce.

Workforce Challenges

Movement into the United States workforce necessitates a functional level of the English language to be able to transition into and operate within the workforce. Gaining knowledge about the culture, customs, laws, regulations, and any licensing requirements of the United States requires English language skills. These military-related immigrant women addressed their hopes and aspirations for the world of work but recognized that their limited English language speaking skills served to limit their job choices and make licensing testing difficult, if not impossible. J.J. pointed out her desire for “interior

design. I want job doing this but must go school, get license.” Lucy shared her longing to “do beauty or flower shop. I want business like China but my English not good.” Sophia summed up her thoughts about taking ESL classes to assist with her future and reiterated:

English is important because I am interested to learn about the regulation, laws, commerce, market value, to understand many things about the United States to help me get a business or management job. Need to learn English to get good job. When I read and write fine English, I will be understanding and learning about United States history, economy, laws, society. I really want to do that. It’s important to get a job with business management. If you don’t know about the history, the economy, or what happened with the country, it is crazy to live in a country where you know nothing about that. I can do nothing without English, no matter my degree from my university.

Likewise, Rose’s focus is to earn a degree in accounting, but her inadequate English language skills prevented her from meeting all of her goals. She shared: “ESL first, then go two years, then transfer. Get a good job. Send money home to take care of relatives. Start associate degree. Will help accomplish by teaching me skills, first English, then accounting.”

Similarly, Suzy wants to get a job, attend nursing school, and focus on orthopedics, weight training, and aerobics: “I want learn more English, and try to speak better so I can get a job and go to college.” Like the others, inadequate English language skills served as her barrier. In addition, Mara added how important learning English was to her in the workforce because America was now her home:

I want speak very well English. I want speak better. I need practice more speaking. My English stinks; I want a good job; my own money. To teach must take test, only in English; must speak to my boss and students. Even if teach Spanish, I need English. No matter what, I need good English.

Also, school district officials advised Nancy to return to school for “American credits” or to take the state certification test to become a public school teacher. Those were the only two choices she was given to try to enter the school district workforce. The credentialing test results reflected that she did not possess an adequate command of the English language. As she explained:

I need to see if I’m good enough to work and to communicate with people in real life. I’m trying to find a job. It’s not easy to change. Everybody’s different, and maybe I’m hard learner, but I need a job! That test very difficult. Two times I try. I put applications everywhere for anything. Only part-time interested in me. I need full-time job. I need to pay bills. My husband not pay child support. My parents help me, but they are old. Cannot help me all the time. Maybe my house will be taken. Where we live? I really worry. I have to support my kids. I have to work, and learn English is very first thing important I have to deal with. I must. There is not any option. I need a good life. I need a good job. I need get the skills I need. I want teach elementary children, but the schools not accept my degree from home; I take certification test in English. I not understand all questions.

Laura shared that “My language is bad. I need change. I need writing, reading, speaking, I need work. Want care old people. Need certificate. Test in English.”

Likewise, Barbara stated: “I want find a good job in health management. I don’t like nurse in hospital. I want office job. I want skills in reading. I need speak English or they don’t want me, but I can work.”

The women commented that learning the vocabulary of the work world was important as well as understanding the English language and obtaining the skills and training required. To enhance their English language skills, they were directed to the available community college available programs by husbands and friends, specifically to an ESL program. They stated that they hoped the available educational programs would serve as a vehicle not only for English language assistance but to provide knowledge

about the culture to move them toward acculturation into the society and workforce of the United States as well as understand more about the implications of being a military spouse.

Military Life

To be an immigrant military spouse means adapting to the military way of life that has provided many opportunities as well as personal and external challenges with temporary duties, permanent changes of station, deployments, field exercises, and training missions. Although Sophia has not had any negative experiences with racism, prejudice, or discrimination within the military, she explained that on a military base where people come from all over the world, there should not be any focus on the differences but on the similarities. She clarified:

There is no time to look the differences. There is no time to look down when there is opportunity to look up. The soldiers have a job. Their priority! Not worry about the little difference.

For some women, their extended family has been helpful with adjustment to life in the United States, but that has not been the case for all military wives. Nancy was the most vocal about her responsibilities and the uncertainties of being a military wife in a country where she did not speak the language. She revealed:

It is the toughest job in the world to be married to the military. To be a military wife they expect from you a lot. You have to be active, support him at his work, support him home and be prepared to be by yourself for long time and like single because maybe he will be overseas or at war or something like that. It's not normal life. It's not stable because you never know. He always even if he here he has to go his field or whatever. They go to the field and training a lot.

Barbara recounted that she could not even understand television when she first arrived in the United States. After time and practice, she feels she has become more

comfortable with the language and has been able to interact within the military and the civilian community. When her husband deployed, she was able to handle the family affairs without any difficulty. She noted:

I think my language is bad, but I try to practice. I feel better now talking to other people. I can have fun. I can laugh. I can understand now. I watch television, and I can understand what they say. This is good for me. But it take years to learn English.

Now that her husband is preparing to deploy, April is learning how to manage all the personal and family affairs while he is away from home. She shared that she is willing to learn whatever is important to keep the household running during his deployment, but she hopes that she will remember how to do everything. She explained:

My husband is right now teaching me and training me how I can do many things like pay bills, take care of car, cut the grass, and all these thing around the house and my life. But, I also have a cousin; she help me every time when I need something. She teach me, she explain me how I can do that, how I can do the things so I think that I will be fine. This year I will be two months alone because my husband will be in training. Someone said this is my training. Next year I will be alone by one year. But I think that I will be fine. I need to wait.

Rose remarked that her husband's family helped her considerably when her husband was deployed and will assist again when he is assigned overseas. She moved in with her husband's parents who made her feel welcome, and his family holds an open door policy anytime her husband is called to an overseas or an unaccompanied duty.

Rose clarified:

I go to my husband's parents if have problems. They help me and my son. It hard to live with them, but they love us and help us and teach us. I happy for that. Good to have them help me.

The military has been a good life for many of the women, but several of them stated that they were not fully aware before they were married of how difficult military

life could be. Sophia felt that despite any problems she had to face while acculturating into United States society, she was determined to persevere because she loved her husband and wanted to make their marriage work in his country. Wanting to understand the military and make her husband's home comfortable, she explained that she did not marry him to find transportation out of her country. She was content there with a career, a good life, and an excellent income. She left because she believed in their feelings for each other and wanted to raise a family together. Sophia confided:

First, I felt conflicted. Life was good. I had house, job, car, take vacation when I wanted. I didn't want to lose single life. Then I thought about a family like my parents. They have ideal family with love and time together. I didn't want Colombian man who spend time with friends, infidelity with 2 or 3 women, irresponsibility, and drink a lot. This American man was a good human person. I thought about a new family. Learn English to make my marriage work.

Like Sophia, Lucy stated that the lack of English language knowledge has been a problem with adjustment to not only the United States but to her husband's work group. As the only Chinese speaker in her husband's military group, she has found it difficult to interact with the other wives. She shared:

The women friendly. Have to speak English. Nobody speak Chinese. I often try talking to them. If you can do English good, you can do anything you want. If you cannot speak English, you have a very hard life.

Likewise, Barbara was the only French speaker in her husband's military unit. She recollected that she could not understand much when interacting with the wives, but time has allowed her to increase her language skills, making her feel more comfortable in social settings. She explained:

I don't meet military wife at first. They talk English, only English. I have very difficult when I speak when I come to the United States. I heard they talking. I understand nothing. No, I can't understand nothing. Nobody speak French. I am alone.

Additionally, Laura described that not speaking English was difficult because her husband constantly translated for her and did not give her the opportunity to work through the language by herself. As a result, when her husband deployed, she felt isolated. She described:

Military wife. Talk English. They talking. I understand no words. Difficult for me when he gone to field or deployment. He talk for me. He handle everything. To me, that not good because I have difficult. I ask school to help me learn English. Good for me.

With positive and negative experiences with her adaptation to the military way of life, April described her adjustment. She clarified:

I know something about the military life because my brother in Colombia, he is military too. I know it's not new for me. We need to move the different places. I learn about new places, new cultures, new languages. But another positive thing is my husband like his job. He enjoy his job, so it's a good thing. I think, that if one negative thing that he need to go to Iraq or Afghanistan or then I need to be alone, so I think that is difficult.

Ana shared that one especially difficult aspect of military life was the separation and reunion. Since every family changes when a military deployment occurs, the adjustment can be a challenging task. Whether the family developed a new routine or became involved in new activities, the pattern of family interaction has changed. When asked if her husband fit right back into the family after a long deployment, she stated:

Sometime he say he have to find his way into our life because we pretty much got everything set out when he came into it, but he is really good at that. He try to find his way in, to catch up what the family is doing, and he fix everything. He can do everything. When he comes home sometime, you know, the fence may be falling apart. He comes home to pretty much fix everything. It take time, though.

Spouses of military members often face frustrations during their husbands' deployments from a lack of information about their whereabouts, their estimated time of return, money difficulties, and feelings of alienation and loneliness. These are diminished when support groups provide encouragement and provide information.

Missy and Nancy both utilized a military organization that provided assistance to them by helping them locate resources and contact other military wives in different units who speak their same language. They explained that the "Army Family Team Building" program sponsored by Army Community Services (ACS) offered them classes that emphasized English citizenship, widow group, insurance, housing, military uniforms, deployments, and a host of other topics designed to focus on communication and group help. Missy commented that ACS was her lifeline because they served as her resource when she had questions during her husband's deployment. She explained:

When husband gone, I not know to ask questions. ACS help me understand more and practice my English. This good help for me. My lifeline. Help me learn to speak more, to say what I think, not stay quiet like in Vietnam. Helped me find community college for more language. Good for me.

Nancy credited ACS as a life preserver that made her feel needed and significant. By giving her the opportunity to help others, she felt she had a place she could visit away from her confining, isolated home life. She commented:

I was home alone. Two little kids. I was lonely. I think ACS can and help others. It is good to help others. That gave me hope. I had some place to go. I was important to somebody. This be a place to go to practice English and know more about the military.

Mara explained the importance of immigrant military wives knowing their rights within the military, the community, and knowing where to go for assistance or

information. For her, ACS was helpful because it provided her with options. Her husband kept information about his workplace and schedule from her; therefore, she was uncertain how and where to go for help, or how to report incidents of family abuse when he was home. Through ACS, she learned about her rights. She explained:

He hit me. I didn't know about his work and who to get help from. Some other soldiers' wives tell me a little, but I didn't know it all. So I didn't know I could go to the police and he gets arrested. The Army can force him to be nice to me. I didn't know. I've just been a Mexican girl. I wanted to leave, and he wouldn't let me. Actually, when he hit me last time I went to the hospital, and I told my doctor. They called the police, and he was arrested, and they took one rank down. The people were mad at me; they were very mad. I don't know why. He hurt me. I know that not right. I can no speak English good, but I am human. This is not military way, I know.

These immigrant military wives participate in the life of the larger military and civilian communities while holding on to their heritage. They incorporate theirs with that of the culture of the United States. They have learned to live within their new community through their connection to the United States military that they state has provided many opportunities for growth and advancement but created challenges from the stress of deployments.

After a long period of separation, reunion, and adjustment require patience and communication. Many military wives understand that their husbands will inevitably face deployment, but many like Suzy hope that his orders will include an accompanied tour so they will move to another duty assignment together and not have to endure a separation. Yet, she realizes a deployment may leave her behind for one to two years, so she continues to practice her English and attend ESL classes to be ready to handle family affairs on her own. Suzy explained:

My husband helps me. People say to me speak English. Some are nice; some are impatient me. I get ready to go anywhere. Get ready for my husband to leave any day, any time. Will stay here if he gone? I don't know. I worry. I worry a lot.

Unfortunately, within a military deployment comes the risk of death. Funeral or memorial services assist family members in coping with the reality of death and provides a sense of closure to the shock. Ana explained that she has a better understanding of the bravery immigrant women display when their military spouses deploy to war zones and return mortally wounded. Despite the possibility of grave dangers, Ana explained that she was proud to support her husband in his military job, but she was overjoyed when he retired and would not have to face any more involuntary deployments. Having never attended an American military memorial service before, Ana was given an in-depth look into another aspect of the American military culture and the finality of a soldier's dedication to his "job to keep freedoms" that she had not previously experienced. What shocked her was that in her country, the bereaved family faced death with extreme sadness and the need to mourn, but in the United States a military death was a reason to celebrate the life. She articulated:

In my country, we mourn the dead to our deepest core. This military service was serene. We celebrated peace to our hearts. Now I understand more. The family proud of their member. Many shots by the rifle. Beautiful ceremony of flag offering to wife. We all with tears.

Immigrant spouses cultivate associations among others within the military, the community, and educational institutions that serve to link them together toward common objectives – that of becoming proficient in the English language and enhancing their movement toward acculturation. Social networking provides support, the sharing of first-hand information, involvement in groups with like interests, challenges, and

possibilities, and the opportunity to develop friendships with women from around the globe.

Educational Programs

Many immigrant military wives recognize that English language proficiency is often a requirement for jobs. Thus, many believed educational programs would serve as a broker, a negotiator, to bridge the cultural gaps, by providing skills needed to transition them into the society and workforce within the United States. The community college ESL programs, they supposed, would influence and facilitate their acculturation by providing a climate rich in English language skills as well as information about the country, its heritage, and its possibilities for their futures. For some, the ESL program impacted and influenced their retention or attrition within the community college setting.

Nancy shared a positive experience with a community college ESL program that helped her regain her sense of self-worth after separation from an abusive husband and an uncertain future as a single mother with small children. She revealed:

After I separated, I went to an American community college. They helped me know some programs to improve me, to communicate with people, or to get adjusted to life in the United States. When I went there, I didn't have any confidence. I have low self-esteem. After I went there I felt that I start to live again. Cause I was here for 6 years, and I was just home. I don't know anything. I don't know people. I know nothing. But school helps me a lot. I stay as long as I can.

Several of the women shared that they rely on their husbands to provide information about the United States, the military, and what is expected of them in this new community; however, many of them recognized they needed more information and instruction than their husbands, family, and friends could provide. Isel commented that

“friends spoke English better, so spoke for me. I watched and caught ideas. I’m growing in the language, but I want more from the school.”

Mara shared information about her husband who tried to keep her from learning and using English. She remarked:

I think he doesn’t like for me to speak English or understand English. He doesn’t want me to understand any English. He said to the doctor, ‘she doesn’t speak English. She doesn’t understand it.’ The doctor said she does when you’re not around. He looked surprised. Maybe he control me. That why I go to school to learn English. I can be free to think myself and become part of America and work.

Lucy added that she was comfortable knowing her husband would be available to help her with language difficulties and who has served as her cultural broker. She commented:

If I don’t know, I have to call my husband to help me. Language is my problem. He gives advice. My husband tells me how to do it. Sometimes he sends email to me. He not home. Sometimes deploy. Can’t call me. I’m alone. By myself. I need know English to get a job. School help me.

Nancy expected the ESL program to provide support to help her meet her English language acquisition goals. She commented:

I want to stand on my own feet. The Army makes ladies strong. The college should help me too. I need more help. More time for talking to teachers. Ask questions. Get help. Make teacher available outside class. Maybe tutors. I want independent, but I need ideas. Need someone to be for me to answer questions. Motivate me.

The women in this study shared that the community college ESL program offered them an opportunity to learn, practice, and utilize the English language in more than simple conversations. Whether they worked on reading, speaking, writing, grammar, or

listening, they could pick and choose the skills they desired and enroll in classes that would help them meet their objectives.

Rose, from Thailand, shared her thoughts about her adjustment to the American way of life, her lack of English language skills, and her decision to enter a community college. When she first arrived in the United States, she barely spoke English, had no drivers' license, and learned that her husband was deploying. She explained that she felt the need to become more independent quickly even though her in-laws would support her. As a result, her classes at the community college helped transform her into an English communicator, although she feels she still needs more instruction and practice. She specified:

Now I more confident speaking and handling affairs. Like handle doctor and insurance company. Benefits of military good. Negative is time – the separation and time alone. My husband go to war in Iraq or Afghanistan. This is bad for me and my son. I do all things at home. Hard for me, but I do it. I understand more, talk better. School is good.

Missy explained that her ESL classes along with her television set increased her vocabulary. Her cultural broker was her husband, but he did not provide the fundamental grammar rules, idioms, and slang inherent within the English language that she heard when she went to the store or talked to her neighbors. She decided to utilize television: “All I learned from television and ESL classes.” She also explained that although she had attended the ESL program for only a year, she took three to four classes each semester and considered herself a program veteran.

Although most of the women enjoyed the opportunity to experience English language learning in a comfortable environment and shared that they were basically

receiving the skills they desired, the ESL program was not the panacea for all of them. A few had endured negative experiences that prompted them to reassess the benefits of the program and consider a move to another program or educational institution. When reflecting about the effectiveness of the instruction within her community college ESL program, Missy has not always been happy with the program, especially some of the teachers. She indicated:

I like first grammar teacher. My reading and vocabulary class I took a waste of time. The way the teacher teach. I expect more from them. Looks like a lazy class. I don't know. Easy class. Everyone cheating. I don't like that, to be around people, or the teacher. The teacher let them cheat. That not good for the teacher because no respect. Why I stay here to learn nothing?

J.J. clarified her feelings about some ESL teachers she felt did not treat students equally. She commented that “blonde is better” and sensed that she would have received more attention from the male teachers if “I didn't have black, Asian hair.” That perceived double standard upset her. She recounted a particular class where the instructor and active duty military students who were also enrolled in the class talked more about the military during class that had no relation to the content and bored her. She explained:

I not want to know military history. I want to learn English which my reason for that class. Teacher should focus on me, student, and teach me. Spend too much time with soldiers, talking military. Ok, if this was speaking class, but was grammar. How that help me learn English if he speaking to them about military and not the class information? He maybe pay attention to me if I was blonde hair.

During this interview, J.J. was contemplating whether to change schools or drop out. She felt she could have stayed at home, read the book, practiced online, and taught herself, but she opted to remain in the program because of her new friends in her social network.

Within the educational system that includes office staff, counselors, teachers, and other students, occasionally stereotypical comments occur that become hurtful and demeaning to immigrant students who may misinterpret the information conveyed. For example, Rose disclosed:

People sometime stereotype ESL students. They think ESL students can't speak English. I speak some, but I still learning. I go school to learn. They say I am dumb. Maybe they are dumb. I am trying. Are they? This hurt me. Make me sad.

J.J. related another negative experience with a school counselor who refused to listen to her as she attempted to sign up for more than one class during a semester. She was not employed, both of her children were in school, and her husband was working, so she felt she could devote her energies and attention to learning the English language. J.J. divulged:

I want four classes, not one. I want move out of ESL fast. I have time. The counselor she tell me I cannot do this. She told me my English not good. I asked her why other students do this. She tell me I'm not the other girl. She not said anything else. She talk to me like I'm idiot. I can't speak English good, but I not stupid.

Another particular experience involved Barbara with a community college counselor who hurried through course registration and preferred not to explain the community college and program pre-requisites. She recounted:

Put people down, treat me like an idiot. Advisors should give people hope. Give them power and build them up. Talk to me like human. I'm a person too even if I come from another country. I not always understand. Need time to think, translate. Where I learn this if not from a counselor? How can I know? I'm new here. I need to ask questions.

When asked what might influence her to leave the ESL program if the educational climate did not change for her, Isel shared that she expected the community college environment to be different. She remarked:

Teacher not care about me. No help me. Should talk more to me. Sometime I think the teacher no like me. I ask questions. He no answer me. Everybody else ok. I need answers. I need help. Why he not help me? I should stay here. Why? Unhappy. I'm important like other students.

The majority of these women indicated that their educational experience within the community college ESL program was generally beneficial. They appreciated the time, energies, and dedication of most of their professors. Yet, there were some program and instructional areas that they felt needed significant improvement. From course offerings to course management, the utilization of technology to a variety of skill activities, these women conveyed various suggestions about the need for program improvement.

Ana planned to continue her language learning at the community college, but she wanted “another grammar level” added to the course offerings. She felt that she would benefit from Grammar II since she was serious about learning the basic constructions of the English language, and one semester was not enough. Rose added that the accent reduction course should be required, plus she wanted instructors to include a focus on American culture within the readings, writings, and grammar examples. She explained that she wanted to know more about the history and culture of the United States and expected her ESL classes to provide that information.

Suzy shared that rubrics would be helpful for every class by providing students with advanced grading information. She also commented that when students give a

presentation, those presentations should be clear enough for everyone to understand and not waste student time with unrehearsed or unprepared presentations. She explained:

Students listen but gain no new information. What good for me to listen if I can't understand? I come in class to learn. I want know everything about America. Teach me. Tell me. Show me. I learn. We speak English. I need to understand their English. Is difficult. I learn from every student, but they not speak clearly in English.

Young recounted a story about a scheduled test. She felt that the grade did not accurately represent her ability to handle and understand the course content. She stated that her teacher had not covered that material but included it on a test that resulted in her low grade with no opportunity for remediation. She explained:

One time reading class teacher didn't even make a test. She used old one. She scratch out things but give test what we didn't even have in class. So I refused to take the test. She disrespecting the students. She not listen me. We don't deserve that. This is a professional field, not some place in the welfare field. You understand me? Teacher not even make up her own test! I think unfair, so I tell the department head lady. If I just begun the program, I probably not stay.

Missy summed up her thoughts about the responsibilities of the ESL program. She was committed to learning the English language, but she did not feel that all of her objectives for particular skills were being met. She commented:

I wanna learn more pronunciation because I want teach my son. I want speak English clearly, absolutely. Want to finish college. For get a job later 'cause my husband, like if something happened. He military, you know. War zone scary for me. I need more practice. Conversation practice. More time my skills using English. Teacher contact more. Need more classes.

All but two of the participants indicated that a technology component would benefit the ESL students. The Internet could serve as an interactive component, both for instruction and remediation from their homes, so they would not have to spend long hours in labs on campus. With military husbands frequently deployed, these women with

children stated that it was exceedingly difficult to balance the demands of the required lab hours for each course with their family responsibilities.

Barbara explained her thoughts about a technology component. She exclaimed:

Technology. Would be wonderful! Also, will fit my schedule because I don't have to drive. I don't have to worry about child care. I just stay at home at the computer, and I have a teacher with me online. Do the "Tell me More" program at home instead of lab. I can do 16 hours at my home.

Likewise, Suzy explained, "Labs do at home. Save time. I would like to add a lab from home and don't drive out in the heat." In addition, Rose commented that "lab at home would be helpful. Quieter at home to work. No students making noise with papers and books."

Conversely, J.J. felt that the lab time was the wrong system. She shared that the 16 hours requirement was not enough lab time because she needed more activities. She commented:

Activities help me with vocabulary in my reading class. No grades for lab and practices. I reach 16 hours. I'm finished with lab. I get 100%, 15% of the grade. I want to learn more English. Program no have more activities. No talking to teacher while in computer program. Only computer.

Sophia indicated that she did not want to utilize technology at home. She explained:

I don't think that technology is a good idea because the best way learn other language is to living a language, and living the language means for me that you spend time in class with other students of other countries. Maybe the Internet is more passive. I like teacher there to answer questions I have. Computer didn't give me personal attention.

Despite differing points of view about technology, utilizing the Internet provides choices to help the military wife meet her family obligations as well as the educational

demands that challenge her management of multiple responsibilities and commitments. Nancy stated that a military wife is not always able to depend on her husband for child care while she attends class, so she advises “a backup plan” that includes technology.

Although the educational programs offered opportunities for English language instruction, not all experiences within the classrooms and counseling offices were positive for these women. Despite those challenges, all the women except two were determined to persist in their goal for English language acquisition in the community college where they began the program.

The available opportunities for social networking within the community college were perceived as integral in their move toward acculturation. By establishing a network of like-minded individuals, the women generally felt bonded to a group working toward the same goals.

Social Networking

Historically, many members of ethnic groups have often banded together in distinct communities. In addition to giving them a sense of protection from the dominant, receiving culture, many felt comfortable in a group that shares a common heritage and language. In contrast, many immigrant military wives move out of their ethnic grouping and establish roots in the general community to experience the wider society of their receiving community. Rather than continuing to isolate themselves from the community by remaining within their specific ethnic groupings, these immigrant women were progressing at differing rates into United States society through a combination of family, work, churches, peers, or the local educational institution. Social

networking has propelled some of these women toward acculturation through their interaction with others within the community who share similar experiences.

To be a speaker of a language other than English has created challenges, but social networking enables immigrant military wives to develop a network of support. This community of peers bonds them to the broader communities and nudges them out of their specific ethnic groupings. The establishment of a social network, especially within the community college setting, was helpful to Nancy when adjusting to and adapting to the American way. She shared:

At school and on campus, I met a lot of people of different cultures, different students, and I think I got most of my friends from there. It's very good, positive because before I didn't know a lot of people. I was scared to talk.

Laura shared, "Now I talk to military wives. I speak English more. At school I learn English, and I know the people of other countries." Likewise, April commented that she enjoyed "meeting people. Learn new things," while Sophia stated that "have to move from self. It's me and I. Move to we." In addition, Missy remarked:

The more you talk, the more you understand. Need to hear many voices. Get out the house. Make new friends. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Learn how people feel. Wait before talking. Share ideas. Learn more.

Isel also shared, "I make friends from places everywhere. Is very rewarding," while Suzy shared, "Good experience. Made new friends from different countries." Likewise, Barbara remarked that "for rewarding experience I have made friends with a few new people."

Prior to her enrollment in the community college, Nancy described life as slowly drowning her. She felt alone because her husband kept her isolated from family and the

neighbors. She had no one to talk to when he was deployed, at work, or at home. In addition, Nancy recalled her limited English vocabulary and her fear of speaking English. She commented:

I remember when the mailman came, I just speak a few words. I was nervous. When I opened the door I said I don't speak English. I just let him know from the beginning. And because I am nervous, I don't want to talk. That was my problem. I should have made myself talk. Now I talk to everyone, especially when I am in school.

The women in this study stated that social networks enabled them to feel and become part of an American group. April shared her thoughts about building social networks by summing up the value. She explained:

I form positive relationships with many people, have humor, adjust to changes. That helps me grow into new me. I happier now. I talk to others. It's nice. Good for me. Good for my husband. He know I am ok. My friends also help me.

Several of the participants stated they did not have much contact within the general community at the present time because they were busy attending school, taking care of their families, trying to learn English, supporting their husbands' jobs, and keeping the household functioning. Those who found time to interact within the community were those who had resided in America for a longer time than the others and felt more confident with the language. For example, Young, who has been in the United States for over 35 years, has translated for a county judge and a juvenile department. She reiterated that although she only made it through sixth grade, she did not stop learning the language and using it to help others. As stated several times during the interview, Young was no longer the desperately poor Korean girl from the mud but the princess that she is today. She proudly exclaimed:

I'm proud of myself because when some Koreans don't know how to speak English, they have a problem. They call me, and I always get up and go help them. To do like the social security department, police department, human resource, lawyer's office, many things. Koreans don't speak English. If they call me for help, I can do it. I can go help them. I'm so proud of myself cause I had the ESL. Without the ESL program, I don't do these things.

Sophia enjoys the challenge of learning another language and becoming active within her neighborhood. She shared:

The language in the United States is the most important thing for somebody that wants to learn a new language. Live the language because you espeak with persons who espeak very good. They live the language. When you go inside the country, you have to learn. You need to learn the way to speak. You need to read. This is a good experience. I think that this is the best way to learn other language, so I think that this is a good.

Isel maintained her ethnic identity but moved out of her ethnic group and into the general community. She does speak Spanish at home to her children, but she speaks English at work. She remarked that she appreciates the opportunity to do something more with her life in her new home within the United States. She stated:

I like this state. This is the only place I stay where my child can play in the yard and I can esmell and look everything better. I say, you know what, I don't need another life. So, I feel if you want it, something good in your life, you do it better. Better chance, this is America.

The women in this study indicated that external forces such as the community, which include racial discrimination and cultural differences, the workforce, military, educational programs, and social networking have either contributed to or hindered their development as well as movement into the United States culture. Yet, internal forces have equally influenced their ability to acculturate into their new society within the United States.

Internal Forces

Personal forces also influence the movement toward acculturation of these immigrant military wives. These internal forces, whether positive or negative, involve psychological or socio-emotional characteristics that became a force for change. The internal forces were love and care and self-efficacy. The women demonstrated their self-efficacy through their persistence, patience, and their resilience that contributed to an explanation of why some immigrant women are successful despite challenges and setbacks while others are not.

Love and Care

A significant finding was the role of love and care in the acculturation process. Marrying an American military member and having to relocate to the United States was a challenge for many of the women, but they all commented that their wedding vows served as the catalyst to learn the English language, understand their husbands' culture, support him in his demanding military occupation, feel comfortable in his country, and eventually move into the workforce. These immigrant women emphasized that they married for love; they did not set out to find an American serviceman to move to the United States. Lucy remarked that she accepted her husband's proposal "because he's a nice man. I think if I miss him, I never find a man like him again. We fell in love." Young added, "He likes me. I don't have anything to lose to date with him. I started liking him. Then I love him." Like Lucy and Young, Ana explained:

We fell in love with each other. We really like each other. We wasn't expecting getting married at all when we started seeing each other. I really love him, and I think we can make it work.

Likewise, Suzy holds strong feelings for her husband. She exclaimed: “Even that I know I going to leave my family and my house, stop everything, I’m going to be with the right guy and the boyfriend that I love. My choice is good!”

The majority of women adamantly stated that their love remains strong due to their desire to understand their husbands better despite the challenges they have experienced in their cultural transition within the United States. They married knowing that their future as a couple depended upon becoming conversant in the same language, integrating one culture into another, and raising their children in a bicultural home. They also believed that the community college would be able to offer a program to facilitate their English language acquisition through instruction in speaking, reading, writing, accent reduction, grammar, and listening which they hoped would assist toward their acculturation and help them better communicate with their husbands and other family members.

Not all marriages thrived, however. Mara is an example where one spouse did not accept half of the family responsibilities that created internal conflicts that overwhelmed her at times. When asked what her first year was like in America with her military husband, Mara remarked:

When he deployed I’m not comfortable handling anything. I don’t know the English language. I have no experience with the military. I don’t know what to do or where to turn. We were from different cultures. He had expectations I could not accept.

Likewise, in Egypt where Nancy was raised, slavery was a concept from the ancient past. Yet, this same antiquated notion existed within her household and created tension within six months of her marriage. Nancy began to develop an antagonistic

attitude toward her husband who felt he was the ruler of his kingdom and held expectations from her that she did not understand. She confided:

It was difficult. It's a whole different life. From my experience I have to, he want me to help him a lot. I have to wake up with him early to fix him his coffee at 5 o'clock. He need to go to PT, and I iron every day his uniform. He wants to be very neat. I cook for him and take care of everything. He expected me to help other women during deployments. I only spoke Arabic. I did not know English. I felt I was walk on a road with mine fields. I was waiting one to explode. When he deployed 1 year, I have to help. It was difficult because I don't understand English. I remember one time one lady was in hospital. I went there. She doesn't have anybody to help her. She had an accident, and she had her baby in the car. She was hurt but her baby died. I didn't know how to say what I was feeling. I remember I was looking for something to help with. It was very difficult. I needed to tell her more, but I can't express myself. English is still hard for me.

When asked about life in the United States, April remembered an internal conflict that occurred on Valentine's Day while they were dating. She lived in Colombia, and he lived in the United States. She related:

Valentine's Day here is February 14th. It shows love. In Colombia, it is the second Saturday in September. I remember when we were boyfriend and girlfriend in love. In February some presents were at my work. I say, what is that? It says Happy Valentine's Day. Oh, this is important in the United States. In September I was alone, no present. I say to him, it is September. He doesn't remember. I know that he was waiting a present or something in February, but I never sent nothing to him. Now I say this is a thing that we need to celebrate two times. Then I felt sad.

April stated that combining celebrations has made their feelings for each other stronger, and she loves and cares for him more today than she did yesterday.

Love and care, a socio-emotional aspect of internal forces, brought out both positive and negative responses in the participants. From love and care, persistence, a characteristic of self-efficacy, was revealed as an important personal attribute. Thus, persistence, a personal psychological characteristic, evolved during their narratives.

Their willingness and determination to meet various challenges surfaced during the interviews, which they stated assisted them in taking advantage of opportunities for acclimation to the culture of the United States and their acculturation into their new society.

Persistence

Persistence, the forward movement toward an internal goal despite challenges or misfortune, was best explained by Ana who left her own business, moved to the United States, and struggled to learn the idioms and slang of the English language in addition to the customs, politics, and laws of the community as well as the demands of military life.

To explain her dedication to her goals, she commented:

Life makes you this way. Because you can't give up. Life is about keep on going. So, when you find a struggle you have to try to figure it out and move on. Persist to go on. Make something happen.

Isel discussed a job interview that reflected her tenacity. She asked the manager to give her the opportunity to prove she could perform the job. She was willing to demonstrate her skills and talents without pay. She explained:

It no matter if you from here or from another country or Panama when you show you can do it, they give a chance. When you have this job, I do interview, do many things, and people follow me. I say I don't speak well, and I don't know maybe what I tell the girl, you give a chance to me, I do it. She said, I like that. I said, give me the chance. You no need to pay me. I show you. She says, no, it's ok. The people give it to me the job. So, is what you want in your life to do something good? You want a learn and show something for somebody. I think this is only that. So that whatever complaint people have to me as immigrant, I'm really, really happy where I'm coming from. I persistence because I now have my job.

When asked to identify personal factors that kept her moving toward her goals of learning the English language and approaching acculturation into the society of the United States, April replied:

Motivated. Determined. Persist. Keep working when times difficult. I set goals, adjust to changes. I can achieve my goals. I am challenged. Will work hard to achieve. Can work as long as it takes to learn something.

Laura was excited about joining the ESL program at the community college. She rarely missed a day of school and was determined to learn the English language. When her doctor assigned her bed rest, she defied the order and persisted by attending classes. During her eighth month of pregnancy, her baby was stillborn, forcing her to withdraw for that semester. She was devastated by the death of her baby, but she also was incensed that she was unable to attend classes. She shared:

I need a job. I want talk to other people very well. I need learn English so I can learn speak my husband's friends in English. I don't understand them. I like school. I'm very happy. I learning more English, and I learning more things. I never know before. I have go on, for me and for my baby.

When asked if she was happy taking classes at the community college, Laura replied, "Yes, I'm very happy. I learning more English, and I learning more things. I know I do goals. I can be success. I keep working."

Isel, in particular, reviewed the difficulty she faced with passing her writing class and how her persistence was the impetus to motivate her to try again. She explained:

When twice times I don't pass my writing class, I cry in the class. I cry in the car. I cry everywhere. But nothing has changed. I only try again. Focus again. Correct the mistakes that I do before. I can try to do it now. I change to learn the skills for pass the class. I take the same class again and again to pass. I never accepting failure.

Comparatively, Young shared an example of persistence in her life. Her family in Korea was too poor to buy her books, pencils, and paper for school, so she bartered; she completed homework assignments for others in return for school supplies. Because her parents believed that a girl should babysit or work in the household, they discouraged her from attending school. Young disobeyed them and continued attending even though she had to walk barefoot across wet, muddy rice paddies to get to the schoolyard in both winter and spring. Despite her desire to continue her elementary education, however, Young was ultimately forced to drop out during 6th grade to help take care of family responsibilities. Later when she arrived in the United States, Young could barely read Korean and spoke no English. She explained:

I tell everybody I didn't know how to read, to write a check. You know what I used to do? I would make 1 to 10 to 20 to 100 to thousands. I would write. I look at and I copy. I didn't ask someone to do for me. I did it myself. I am successful businesswoman. Life has hardships, but you have persistence to walk past and reach success. I came from mud to a princess. Life cannot get better than that!

Barbara best explained persistence. She revealed:

There will always be problems, but I handle them. I work hard when challenges come to me, and I adjust to changes because I am patient person. I work hard. I understand English more. I come long way. I make my goal, and I meet it. I persist for me.

Equally important for Mara was her desire to meet others outside of her social, military, and ethnic group while encountering resistance from her husband. She explained:

I think he doesn't like for me to speak English or understand English. He got mad when I start going to ESL classes. He said me I don't deserve to go to school. Now he at new duty station. I here. I go because I want go.

Because she wanted to interact with others and attend school, Mara does not ask her husband for tuition money. She visited the financial aid department at the community college and secured her own funding through student loans. When asked what his thoughts were now about her education, she acknowledged:

When he home, he doesn't say anything, doesn't ask me about my grades and schedule. Nothing. He doesn't notice when I go to school. I good because I go forward. He now in other country deployed. Leave me alone. I do what I want. Take care of my children, study, and learn English. I am learning.

For these women, their persistence fueled forward movement toward their internal goals despite challenges or setbacks within the workforce, the community, the military, the family, or educational programs. Persistence, for them, was figuring out the problem and making a plan to remedy the situation; however, patience, another characteristic of self-efficacy, is the impetus to persist despite the odds.

Patience

Despite challenges, the military immigrant wives interviewed stated that they generally reach their goals by demonstrating not only persistence and resilience but patience. Despite occasions of impatience with the English language, the military, bureaucracy, educational programs, and the culture of the United States, their patience allowed them to steadfastly face their trials or challenges without complaint.

April, who faced a setback in her timeline, was dedicated toward English language acquisition. Likewise, J.J. discussed her patient determination to become integrated into the United States culture, both for herself and her children. She wanted to feel she had accomplished more than living in a Thai group isolated from the American culture. As a result, she admits that she is impatient with those who do not acculturate

into the receiving culture, but she has learned to be patient with herself and take the time to listen and learn. She explained:

I try, and I reach all my goals. When I came here, I met some couple. I asked them how long they been here. They say 30 years. I look how they speak. When comes to paperwork, they have to run around. They don't know what is this. I don't want to be like that. I wanna depend on me, be independent. I don't have to ask anybody. I want to be able to read anything and do anything I want. I just don't want to be like, 30 years, and one day I go back to my country and I didn't learn anything. Like, why did I waste my time? But I use patience to get my goals, or I get crazy.

By the same token, Suzy, Missy, Ana, and Laura initially lost their patience with various institutions such as the community college, the military, or the workforce but came to realize that patience would best assist them in reaching their goals. Suzy shared that she had attended college in Mexico, but her credits were not recognized in the United States. She shared:

In the United States I need a GED. I can't do much. I am a housewife now. I want to go to work. I taking classes. Learn the language. I be patience with myself. I start with beginning. I cannot change the rules. One step a day.

Missy discussed her thoughts about the challenges of military life as an immigrant with a deployed husband. She commented:

He deployed. Come back one year. I worry. Military wife. When I came here what I need patience. I try to have it. Too much time gone from family. He return for 2 weeks in 6 month. Hard for my son. Hard for me. I miss him. Military difficult. I ok.

Like Missy, Laura shared that deployments were difficult for her, but she had to learn patience to adjust to the challenges. "I no like deployment. I am very worried. I more missing him, but I patience. His job. His life. Our life." In addition, it was Ana who explained:

It took me three years to get my kids from Honduras. It was misunderstanding between some paperwork. Now one problem to another. First, paperwork. Second, military life. Third, school. Then deployment. Too much challenges! But I patience. No way to be other.

Many of these immigrant women considered patience a significant virtue to assist them in adapting to the challenges they were facing within the military, the community, their personal lives, the workforce, and educational programs. They felt they were slowly becoming different women. As many shared, their slow transformation began with an understanding of the ways of the culture in the United States, beginning with a better comprehension of the English language and being patient with themselves as they learned to navigate within the language and the culture.

Another personal trait they shared in addition to the persistence and patience needed to meet their goals and conquer challenges was resilience. Resilience assisted with challenges and changes in their adaptation to the diversity within the United States.

Resilience

Resilience, the capacity to cope with stressful and adversarial challenges, is a return to the previous state of normal functioning. Resilience is the spirit to remain flexible when life presents challenges. Both Young and Mara discussed their willingness to remain flexible when dealing with challenging situations.

Young recognized the need to adjust her belief system as she began to adapt to her new culture in the United States. She explained the changes that resulted from her resilient character as she learned the expected behaviors in American homes. She disclosed:

When in my country for long time we don't have couch. When I sit on couch now, my feet get swollen because the blood stays. So I sit on the floor. My mother-in-law was very shocked. She said that is dirty places. In my country we take our shoes off when we go inside the house. My mother-in-law say women never go barefoot unless you in the bedroom. I was barefoot and walk around the house. She say either wear socks or house shoes. You show bare feet only in the bedroom, not in the outside area of the house. That's culture. Big different culture. I change. I learn. I do right. I very resilient because I change my old ways to new ones.

On the other hand, Mara recounted her desire to meet others but encountered resistance from her husband. She observed:

I think he doesn't like for me to speak English or understand English. I go to school. I make own decisions. Have my own mind. I fight for my choice. I know my mind.

Mara reflected that she felt resilient because she was able to move forward in a positive direction while being pulled by him in the other. When asked what her husband's thoughts were now about her education, Mara divulged that "I make new friends and enjoy life without him. I move ahead no matter problems he give me."

Thus, the external and internal factors coupled with the traits of persistence, patience, and resilience advanced their transformation from the women they were to how they are now. Although their journeys and experiences differed, their desire for English language acquisition and acculturation has been a common goal.

Personal Transformation

The narratives of these immigrant women demonstrated their courage when moving from one country to another. Despite any external or internal challenges, they stated that whatever trials crossed their paths, they would be successful; however, they needed the English language skills to navigate into the receiving society. This included

not only learning the English language but the culture and customs of the United States, the laws, the food, the differences inherent within the educational systems and an acceptance that they would transform from the person they were into the new person they would be.

A result of a higher sense of internal control led to a willingness to face the challenges and regulate their reactions to stressors, discomforts, disorientations, and anxieties they faced when left alone in a foreign country due to the deployments of their military husbands. Each woman interviewed exhibited an aura of determination to face and defeat challenges and uphold the investment they made in their new family lives.

For example, when she first arrived in the United States, Ana explained that life was difficult. She did not understand the laws, the culture, or even the language at first, but she slowly changed as she learned more about the United States and the people who were her neighbors. She related, “At the beginning I got here, and adapting to the language was hard. Because at that time I wasn’t speaking English good enough.” Although talking to other people was a challenge, Ana recognized that she had to move past her hesitation to speak to learn more about the culture and people of the United States. When asked her thoughts about the differences between the American and Honduran cultures, Ana stated:

It is way different from my hometown. We live in an open place where everybody knows everybody. You get up, and the first person you see is your neighbor. You have to say good morning to her. Even if she is not blood related to you, you call her aunt. If it’s a kid, you have to be polite, respectful. Here is different. Very different. But it’s good.

Ana explained that although she was still a Honduran, she was also an American. She noted her personal change and remarked that she felt good about her transformation. She commented that the old must make way for the new. She could keep remnants from her culture but had to mix them with parts of the American culture to create the best mix for her children who would grow up in the United States and call the United States home.

Similarly, Nancy confided that she was often depressed and extremely lonely when she first arrived in the United States, but that changed the first day she walked onto a community college campus. Feeling the immediate transformation from a recluse-like existence, she became energized and refreshed because she was doing something for her, by her. Her husband was not part of that picture, and she was comforted at the thought of making friends, sharing phone numbers, and getting out of the house and discovering parts of this new state that she had never before seen. She explained:

My marriage didn't work, and I was like alone, single mother, and the school helps me a lot when I feel like in the water. I need help, and they just give me what they call safe rope. Teachers gave me belief in myself. They listened. They helped. I changed. I am free now, so I make my own mind up and became a new woman, part American and the other half Egyptian. My change is very good.

Whatever the challenge, situation, or experience, these women indicated that they believed they could accomplish their goals not only through the love and care of their husbands and family but their traits of persistence, patience, and resilience that propelled them forward to meet their goals. Each narrative was a testament to their dedication to their goals of English language learning and the move toward acculturation. Although

their motivations differed, the end result remained the same. They wanted to become a part of the United States culture and were determined to make that happen.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a selected community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and whether their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation. The data revealed that both external and internal forces influenced their move toward acculturation. In addition, the intentional or unintentional personal transformation experiences were influenced by English language acquisition.

Seven themes emerged from external forces. These included the community, workforce, military, educational institutions, racial discrimination, cultural differences, and social networks. Two themes emerged from internal forces that included love and care and the elements of self-efficacy – persistence, patience, and resilience. The findings indicated that personal responsibility for English language learning was the driving force behind their desire to understand the way of life for an immigrant military spouse living, working, and attending a community college in a multicultural society within the United States.

Despite the challenges inherent within adaptation to the life of a military wife in a new country, the women in this study indicated that the crossroads they faced only served to make them stronger women and wives. Despite a limited command of the

English language, these women were willing to accept the challenges a military separation due to deployment would bring, and they would do so by acculturating into the society of their new country, their home their husbands were defending.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experiences of military-related immigrant wives enrolled in an ESL program in a community college. This study sought to understand the external and internal forces that facilitated or hindered their acculturation process into their community of residence and how their participation and retention in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation.

The site chosen met four specific criteria: (a) there was ease of entry onto the campus and accessibility to the students within the ESL program, (b) the community college offered an opportunity to build relationships with the faculty and staff, (c) the ethical standards that controlled the research could easily be maintained, and (d) a cultural mix of immigrant military wives lived within the local community.

Prior to conducting the study, I completed a pilot study that included nine foreign-born military wives to test the interview questions and to gauge interest in the study. From their feedback, I was able to refine my interview questions.

The participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling of immigrant wives of either active duty or retired military members. The study participants included students who were currently enrolled or had previously been enrolled in a community college ESL program. All of the participants were born in a foreign country and had married military members and moved to the United States.

The conceptual framework chosen for this study was comprised of three models: Berry's (1997, 1998, 2001) Acculturation Theory, Bandura's (1995, 1997) Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's (2003, 2004) Student Retention Theory. In this study I explored and analyzed the perceptions and experiences of immigrant military spouses who were enrolled or had been enrolled in an ESL program at a community college. The specific research questions that this study attempted to answer were:

1. What does it mean to be an immigrant military spouse who is a speaker of a language other than English within the United States?
2. How do external and internal factors influence or impede the acculturation of immigrant military spouses into the wider society of the military and the community?
3. How do ESL programs at the community college level influence the acculturation of immigrant military spouses?
4. What external or internal factors do immigrant military spouses perceive as influencing or facilitating their retention within an ESL program in a community college setting?

To facilitate the exploratory nature inherent within qualitative research, this study was conducted in a realistic setting (Gay, 1996; Ritchie, 1998) where the cultural variables that assist in understanding social phenomena could best be explored. The acculturation experiences of the immigrant military spouses would be reflected through their narratives concerning the external and internal forces that affected their acculturation into the society of the United States. Thus, the basic interpretive approach

allowed for an interpretation of their experiences and interactions within their social world.

Data collection consisted of face-to-face interviews with 14 participants. This provided a rich data set that revealed their goals, experiences, and motivations about becoming a military wife and moving to the United States.

Seven external forces were identified that affected the participants' move toward acculturation. These included: (a) the community, (b) the workforce, (c) the military, and (d) educational institutions. In addition, (e) racial discrimination, (f) cultural differences, and (g) social networks were inherent within not only the community but the workplace and the educational environment. Two internal forces included love and care as self-efficacy that were illustrated by the traits of persistence, patience, and resilience. An outcome of these external and internal themes in conjunction with English language acquisition was personal transformation and a movement toward acculturation into the receiving society.

Discussion

Acculturation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Retention Theory provided a theoretical framework from which to understand the experiences of college students within the United States and were utilized as a springboard for identifying specific themes from this research. Internal strengths and external challenges were identified that explain how an immigrant manages life in the United States (Berry, 2002).

A dominant message throughout this study indicated that love and caring within the family unit was especially significant to the women. Although marrying an American

military member and moving to the United States had been a challenge, the women stated that their wedding vows served as catalysts to learn the English language, understand their husbands' culture, and support him in his demanding military occupation. Despite the stereotype that American military men make good husbands because of their steady jobs with medical benefits (Scholes, 1997), Hong (1982) warns that stereotyping women from foreign countries is unjust. The immigrant military wives adamantly stated that they did not set out to find an American serviceman and move to the United States as a means of escape from an inhospitable environment or unstable living conditions and were incensed when others thought that was the motivating factor in their marriages.

The majority of the women quickly stated that their love remains strong and continues to grow. They married each other knowing that their future as a couple depended upon becoming conversant in the same language. As a result, the husband became the teacher, and the wife became the learner until one of them recognized that the community college could offer a program designed to facilitate English language acquisition through not only speaking but reading, writing, accent reduction, grammar, and listening. Yet, those who were divorced or separated such as Nancy and Mara indicated that their marriages deteriorated despite efforts to maintain the relationships. They were able to enroll in a community college for English language acquisition and begin the acculturation process after they began to make their own personal life choices.

Another dominant message from this study revealed that self-efficacy, which includes the internal traits of persistence, patience, and resilience, served as an

instrument for mastering external challenges. Bandura (1994) advanced that those who possess a high sense of self-efficacy and are able to envision a plan of action will be motivated to accomplish their goals. Through incidents of racial discrimination, cultural differences, and workforce challenges, women such as Young, Nancy, and Isel persisted and did not acquiesce or radically modify their goals for becoming familiar with the society of the United States. Yet, uniting two different cultures within the same household has also presented its share of trials for the bicultural couples. Patience was cited as a significant personality trait that enabled many of the women to adjust to the differences between the cultures, especially the English language dysfluencies that provided hurdles for the women who did not practice much English before they moved to the United States. In addition, resilience was cited as an important trait for the military wife who had to learn to cope with the transient nature of the military job that transformed her into the head of household while the husband deployed.

Within this study, external forces within the community, the workforce, the military, and educational institutions provided positive as well as negative experiences. Some challenges occurred due to the lack of English language skills; however, utilizing a community college to obtain the language as well as workforce skills served as a vehicle for many toward integration into both the civilian and military community and workforce, which was a predominant goal shared within the narratives. For the women in this study, English language acquisition has served as the pivotal point for transformation and the move toward acculturation. None of the women spoke fluent English at the time of their marriage, which they accepted, and made a plan to remedy.

Through the English language, they could better advocate for themselves during deployments, within the classrooms and the community, and when interacting amid their newly developed social networks and at their places of employment.

Figure 1 illustrates that despite external forces, internal forces serve to balance the challenges. From the forward movement toward English language acquisition, the women in this study transformed into bicultural women willing to set goals, make a plan, adjust to changes, and achieve despite challenges. They were moving toward acculturation into the society of the United States because they were determined to make their marriages work for the military men they took as husbands.

The Findings

A review of the literature revealed that theorists have addressed acculturation, social learning, and retention concerning immigrant students at the university level. Since a “number of research universities and elite liberal arts colleges set the accepted public and academic standard for” (Pascarella, 1997, p. 15) higher education, the two-year institutions are essentially under-represented. In addition, research has not specifically addressed immigrant military wives who move to the United States and enter community colleges for English language acquisition.

This research contributes to the literature by providing an examination of the external and internal challenges these immigrant military spouses faced when moving into the society of the United States. Their narratives illustrate their encounters within the community, the workforce, the military, and an educational institution. In addition, their shared experiences reflect their personal strengths that facilitated their movement

toward acculturation into their community of residence and indicate whether their participation in ESL classes contributed to their acculturation. The research questions are used to guide the discussion of findings.

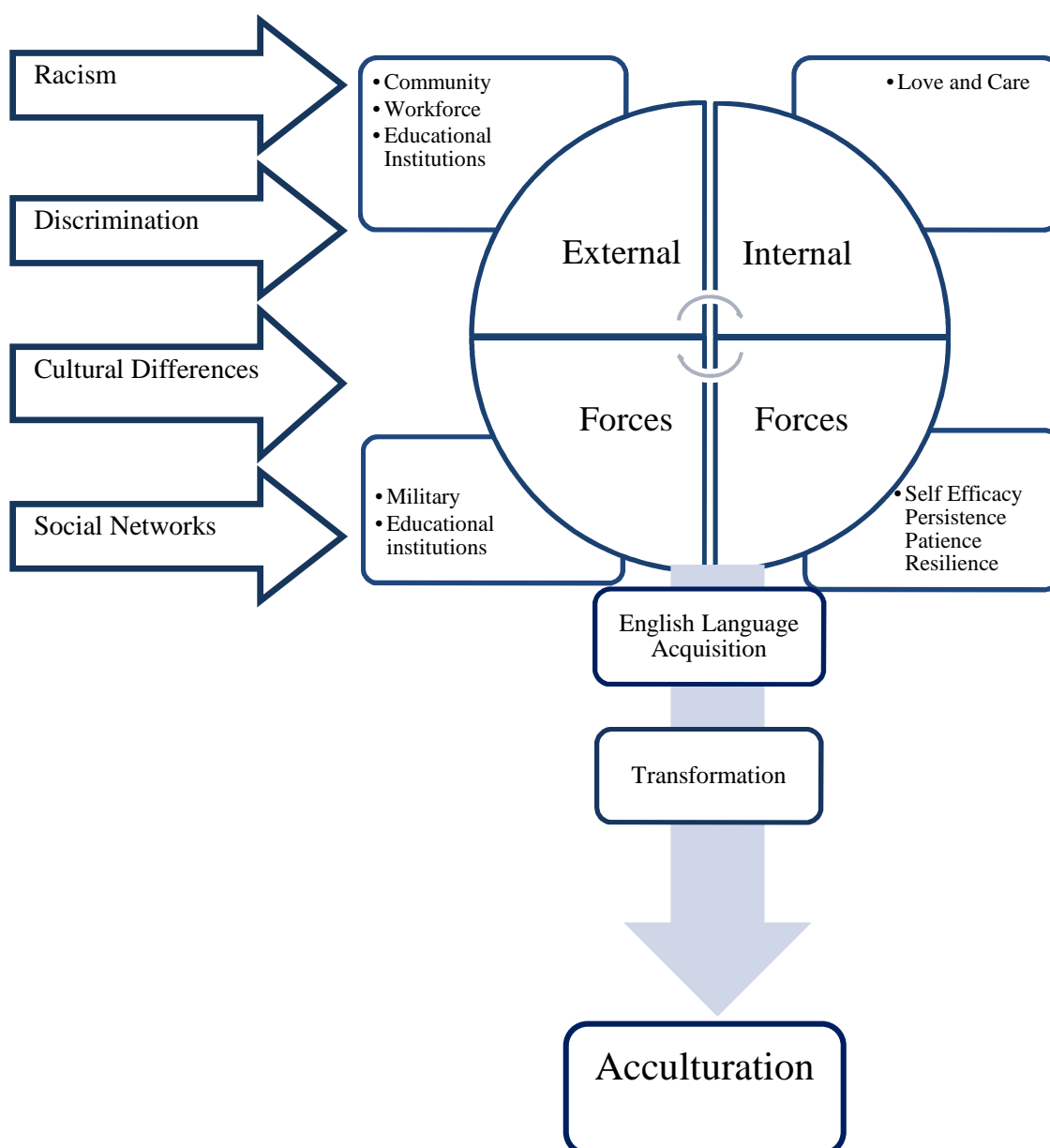


Figure 1. Forces influencing the move toward acculturation.

Research Question #1

What does it mean to be an immigrant military spouse who is a speaker of a language other than English within the United States?

The findings of this study revealed that these immigrant women whose primary language is not English recognized that their English language deficiencies were a significant obstacle toward moving into the society and workforce of the United States. Bonvillain (1997) explained that the acquisition of a second language is complex due to the myriad of situational, social, and cultural aspects inherent in slang, dialects, phonology, syntax, morphology, and the denotative and connotative meanings of words and phrases that make learning a language difficult. When family members are unable to assist with formal English language learning, movement into the community, the workforce, the military, and educational institutions become hindered. As a result, the military wives in this study relied on the community college for English language study.

The women in this study enrolled in an ESL program to learn the structure of the English language through writing, reading, speaking, and grammar. Although they were able to communicate with their husbands through slang and broken sentences, they felt they needed the skills and the vocabulary for improved communication with their family members, for military personnel interaction, and for participation within the community and the workforce.

In addition, because the military often requires spouses to interact with other women during deployments, long training exercises, or in times of bereavement, English bridges the cultures. The ability to utilize the English language also would temporarily

release the husbands from their responsibilities at home and afford them the opportunity to focus on their military duties.

Overall, the participants, similar to those in Tinto's (2002b, c, d, 2003) studies, responded that attending community college English language classes was difficult and challenging due to the psychological and psycho-social changes that were taking place during their adjustment to this new environment. Although acclimation to the campus and the classrooms while establishing social networks with other students was challenging, the women felt energized about learning the English language, became more comfortable within the community college environment, and began to enjoy their learning experiences through improvised communities of learning. Despite some situational, institutional, and emotional barriers (Bailey, 2006), the most impacting barrier that could hinder their retention and provide the impetus for some to leave the ESL program was that their lives as military wives often demanded more attention than their studies.

In addition, the inflexible schedule of course offerings conflicted with their family obligations and caused some to sit out for a semester. Yet, within their home lives, at the community college, within the military, and their community, those challenges did not overshadow their belief that they could be successful in meeting their goals that would prompt them to continue to participate in English language learning and socio-cultural development. In fact, they frequently marveled at their transformation from a minimal user of the English language to one who could carry on a conversation without having to apologize for insufficient English language use. These women

enrolled in the community college on an English language mission. Their dedication to that task was evident during every interview.

Research Question #2

How do external and internal factors influence or impede the acculturation of immigrant military spouses into the wider society of the military and the community?

Berry's Acculturation Theory emphasized that interaction between people from dissimilar cultures influences personal change, and negative external influences may affect acculturation into a receiving culture. This study suggested that the love and care of their family and friends was the primary factor facilitating their move toward acculturation. Although external challenges did affect their well-being, the women in this study indicated that they enjoyed the challenge of learning about the culture of their community and the military. Yet, what was most notable was that they were determined to learn their husbands' language regardless of an unwelcoming community, military, workforce, or campus climate.

Bandura (1994) indicated that those who possess a high sense of self-efficacy, which includes persistence, patience, and resilience, would more likely accomplish their goals. Deci and Ryan (2006) added that people tend to experience a sense of freedom when they engage in what is interesting, important, and vitalizing to them. From this study, despite the demands of family responsibilities and military situations beyond their control, the majority of the women indicated that they were excited as well as resolved

to continue the program, finish, and enter the workforce to begin a new phase of life within the United States.

According to Pajares (2001), although “self-efficacy research has made notable contributions to the understanding of self-regulatory practices and academic motivation, the connection from theory to practice has been slow” (p. 568). Self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one’s capability to succeed in a variety of situations, combined with the confidence required to learn and successfully accomplish a particular task, enabled immigrant military spouses to engage in English language learning in the areas of writing, speaking, listening, or reading.

Within self-efficacy, persistence has been defined in the literature as self-beliefs, which include attitude (Ziegler et al., 2002). Their attitudes helped shape their perceptions and beliefs about enrolling in, attending the community college, and leaving when they felt their needs had been met. Likewise, these immigrant military wives demonstrated their ability to persist by practicing the English language in a variety of settings, evaluating their perceived language weaknesses, formulating a plan to remedy those weaknesses, and celebrating when the competencies were met.

Similarly, within self-efficacy exists cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection factors (Ziegler et al., 2002) that assist with the weighing of options and making decisions. Through the cognitive process, these women constructed their options, weighed the possibilities, and tested and revised them to determine their level of success from the choices they made. Their specific motivational factors included planning a course of action and adjusting their efforts as needed in order to master their

challenges. The affective process encompassed their coping capabilities and how much stress and anxiety they had been forced to experience in order to achieve success. The selection process, then, allowed these women to create their own environments and to exercise control over acceptance or modifications needed to become successful in reaching their goals of English language acquisition and ultimately moved them closer toward acculturation.

Defined as the ability to cope or overcome stress associated with adversity, resiliency is known as “a function of risk factors intersecting with protective factors” (Ziegler et al., 2002, p. 8). These resilient women were able to recover quickly from misfortune or challenging situations without becoming overwhelmed or reacting in harmful ways because of their inner, personal strengths. Likewise, resiliency within the classrooms has been demonstrated through their problem-solving abilities that come from their psychological and spiritual strengths (Warren, 1998). Also, resiliency served not only as a commitment to their goal but became a personal determination to reach that goal through adaptation and adjustment. According to Meichenbaum (2005), resilient women remain optimistic about life and confident in their abilities to bring about personal change or transformation to meet their objectives.

Tinto's Retention Theory supported the view that the development of a network of support bonds students to an educational community and encourages retention. Although inadequate support programs, instructor ineffectiveness, teachers and students who did not speak their primary language, and the frequent military deployments that did not always occur at the most opportune times were challenges addressed in the

narratives, these women felt connected to the community because they felt the need to learn skills both useful and beneficial to themselves and those who depended upon them to speak the English language. They indicated that they were more motivated by their internal need for a higher level of English language learning and understanding than to feel burdened by the external forces that created challenges.

The majority of the women stated that they were excited and energized to be enrolled in classes, learning the English language, making new friends, becoming familiar with new foods and places, and definitely held minimal intentions of leaving the community college ESL program. The choices they made helped them to “cultivate different competencies, interests and social networks that determine life courses” (Bandura, 1994, p. 6). The consensus was that the external factors did not necessarily pose a significant detriment to the meeting of their goals; their personal strengths outweighed any of the challenges they would have to meet.

The immigrant military spouses in this study frequently reiterated that despite the odds, they would become winners in spite of challenges. To them, the jackpot was English language learning and advanced communication skills within their families, the community, the workforce, the military, and educational institutions.

Research Question #3

How do ESL programs at the community college level influence the acculturation of immigrant military spouses?

Berry’s Acculturation Theory explained the interaction between people from different cultures and how they influence each other to create personal change. When

questioned whether the ESL program influenced their acculturation into the society of the United States, the majority of the women indicated that their husbands served as their cultural brokers and were their primary means toward acculturation, not the educational institution. They relied on their husbands to teach them about the United States and what was expected of them as military wives. Although some indicated that it would be helpful, most agreed that any focus on acculturation was not the responsibility of the educational institution. They primarily felt that the community college classes did provide the opportunity to build social networks, but English language instruction was the predominant focus for assisting them through their integration process. As Gollnick and Chinn (1998) stated, “the process of acquiring the characteristics of a given culture and generally becoming competent in its language” (p. 4) was their priority.

Berry (1998) explained their need to hold on to their heritage despite their desire to participate in their receiving society. As a result, the blending of cultures through the integration process influenced their move toward acculturation. Yet, acculturation was a personal goal. Through an intercultural identity, the military wives created unity and social cohesion under the tutelage of their husbands, their cultural brokers, and not through the educational institution.

Research Question #4

What external or internal factors do immigrant military spouses perceive as influencing or facilitating their retention within an ESL program in a community college setting?

This question examined what external or internal factors helped or hindered the immigrant military spouses' retention within the community college program. The overall consensus was that the ESL program only served as a bridge to English language acquisition, but it was their self-efficacy, their internal factors of persistence, patience, and resilience that strengthened their determination to succeed and ultimately led to their retention within the community college program.

Although Young has completed the program and J.J. transferred to another educational institution, the others who participated in the interviews stated that they remained excited about learning the English language and moving toward acculturation. Being enrolled in a community college and building support networks were exciting, but these did not motivate them to remain in the program. What excited them most was that they were learning the English language and felt that this would draw them closer to their husbands and their new community of residence.

They shared narratives about the transformation they noticed in themselves, the culture shock some of them experienced, and how they were intertwining their old cultures with the new. Yet, what was most significant for them was that they determined whether to remain in the ESL program.

It became obvious that their personal efforts did, in fact, lead to their successes. They made it clear that they valued their internal, intrinsic abilities such as persistence, patience, and resilience; they were on a mission to learn the English language and prove to themselves that they could meet their personal challenges. Their resulting particular

transformation and move toward acculturation into the society of the United States has become their personal legacy that they were proud to share.

Although the English language process has often been difficult to master, many of these women stated that they persisted because of pride, the yearning to communicate with their husbands and children in English, the desire for acculturation, the personal need to become involved in their children's school, and their desire for social lives outside of their husbands' work. Their self-pride, which has stemmed from their persistence, patience, and resilience, has served as the catalyst to their successes because these women believed in themselves and their abilities to transition into the culture of the United States. Despite sacrifices, they established a goal and a plan of action to help them achieve English language acquisition. Like Young, who shared her transformation from "the mud to a princess," these women were determined to advocate for themselves in both formal and non-formal settings, especially when their husbands deployed or were on temporary duties at other military installations. They were responsible for the family, and they took that task seriously.

Throughout the interviews, it became evident that these women were or had been focused on English language acquisition and a better understanding of the mores, norms, and traditions of the United States society, their community, the military, and the workforce. Through their particular internal factors, immigrant military spouses understood their capabilities and were willing to work toward becoming a member of the United States culture despite both the external and internal challenges inherent in the attempt.

These specific character traits steered these women toward their goals. They could have remained complacent within their new surroundings but chose to step outside their comfort zones to learn the English language, meet new friends, and acquire the skills needed for the community college classrooms and the move toward gainful employment.

Implications and Recommendations for Theory, Policy, and Instructional Practice

Based on the results of this study and the significance of the published research of Berry's Acculturation Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Tinto's Retention Theory, implications and recommendations for theory, policy, and institutional practice will be discussed.

Theory

Retention, attrition, and persistence theories have contributed a considerable body of research within higher education since the early 1970s; however, these models and theories were generally applicable only to the traditional student, not the non-traditional student who attends on a part-time basis, commutes to class, and is an immigrant military spouse. Although researchers and many institutions recognize the changing demographics of today's students, only a few models include and address the particular needs of the diverse group of speakers of languages other than English who desire English language learning and acculturation into society within the United States.

Although there is a paucity of research within the context of immigrant learners in college classes, no empirical studies could be located that specifically addressed the

challenges and successes of the immigrant military spouse in an ESL program in a United States community college. Research has been limited to raising awareness about the traditional college student; yet, the immigrant military spouse who has attended classes at a local community college exemplifies the growing, mobile, nontraditional student population. Because community colleges provide open-entry opportunities for limited English speakers, more research is needed to move them into the present day community college setting that provides programs and services for the foreign born students and, in particular, the wives of military personnel.

The implications inherent in Berry's Acculturation Theory include understanding the integration process into a culture that affords immigrant adult learners the opportunity to bridge the gap between cultures and move toward acculturation into the receiving community, workplace, military, and educational institution.

Included within Bandura's Social Learning Theory are implications that involve creating opportunities for the immigrant military spouse's social-emotional growth. Rossiter (2003) determined that the social-emotional growth of a student was equally as important as learning another language; yet, opportunities are not always created for choices. Bandura (1994) stated that "by the choices they make, people cultivate different competencies, interests and social networks that determine life courses" (p. 6).

Implications within Tinto's Retention Theory involve the need to create more opportunities for student retention through a reshaping of classrooms designed to provide engagement and enriched learning experiences. Likewise, Crockett (2006) explained that "retention should not be an institutional goal but rather a by-product of

improved educational programs and services for students” (p. 24). Alberts (2006) concurred that “it is disheartening to realize that collectively, institutions virtually blame students for not persisting” (p. 2) while, in reality, retention may be the by-product of student satisfaction (Herbert, 2006). Therefore, by combining Acculturation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Retention Theory to focus on the transient immigrant military spouse will better identify this under-represented population and develop new models.

Educational Policy

Although several studies have explored the immigrant within postsecondary educational institutions, few have included the perspective of the immigrant military spouse in the development of policy. Current policy remains focused on the traditional student, although newly implemented retention programs have begun to note that differences exist between the needs and wants of the traditional and the non-traditional students. The immigrant military spouse has become a growing group of English language learners who arrive within the area due to their husbands’ duty assignments.

As more requirements on colleges and their staff increase (Crockett, 2006) from student demand as well as federal and state mandates, programs and services will require evaluation and possible modifications of policy and practice based on a needs analysis. For example, a resulting policy overhaul may allow the granting of credit for ESL classes, permit students to incorporate the ESL classes into their general requirements (Ignash, 1992, 1995), and afford them the opportunity to complete degree programs in a

shorter time period that would be beneficial for the immigrant military spouses who are, by virtue of their husbands' jobs, transient.

Instructional Practice

McClenney (2004) commented that community colleges face the most difficult job in American higher education due to the transient nature of the students and their varying skills and educational backgrounds. Since a common goal of these immigrant wives is English language acquisition (Abdullah & Eng, 2006), many programs that have been implemented in the past do not adequately reflect the characteristics, needs, and goals of the immigrant students in the classrooms today due to generational (Taylor, 2004, 2007, 2008), cultural, and educational experience differences. The immigrant military spouses who intend to remain living in the United States have more invested in their English language acquisition and interest in acculturation than those students who plan to return to their home countries. Therefore, educational institutions have been challenged to provide practical curriculum (Eger-Herz, 2000) opportunities for quality interaction and technological interventions to move the military wives into the 21st century (Jukes, 2001; Jukes & MacDonald, 2007).

It is evident from the results of this study that despite the inherent personal traits of self-efficacy that includes persistence, patience, and resilience inherent within the immigrant military spouse, the onus for providing quality programs rests on the educational institutions that must evaluate their performance and assess the success of their programs within this group of students. With the recent focus on retention policies and better recordkeeping within the community colleges, more data are being procured

and compiled. At this particular community college, the newly created Retention Services Department offers to tutor, assist, and empower students by helping them to define, clarify, and recognize their academic and personal goals through training, seminars, or workshops, and making resources available to aid them in determining directions that serve the military immigrant wife and not the institution (J. Andersen, personal communication, January 15, 2011).

By investigating the needs of this specific student population, campus and classroom practices could be modified to provide the best service and academic instruction possible. To increase the retention rate and decrease the attrition rate, an evaluation is necessary to determine the satisfaction of the students within the programs and to make changes as needed. This includes focus group activities with students to encourage the sharing of their thoughts, problems, and recommendations.

Recommendations From Participants

As a result of the interviews, six specific recommendations were presented that the immigrant military wives felt strongly about and agreed would assist them in their academic and English language acquisition goals.

First, several of the participants suggested that the campus support personnel become more attuned to the needs, goals, and aspirations of military wives. In particular, when questions were asked in the counseling center, programmed answers were not sufficient. Some of these students felt that because of their English language difficulty, they were viewed as uneducated, unintelligent, and not worthy of a detailed response

that would help them understand the institutional requirements and available programs to start them in their English language learning.

Second, some participants suggested that the college staff and faculty not stereotype students but treat everyone equally. These immigrant military wives were, for the most part, educated in their own countries, held gainful employment, and moved to the United States out of love for their American spouses. Despite the stories about online dating sites catering to international marriages for a price, these women made it clear that they did not use any service to locate and meet an American man for marriage. They did, however, comment that such activities did exist, but they were certainly not part of that group who simply wanted a ticket to the United States.

Third, the participants made specific recommendations that involved technology, rubrics, and instructor credentials. With the available technology, they shared that there is little need to complete mandatory laboratory requirements on campus. Reading and writing programs should be made available online and be accessible 24 hours a day. Also, rubrics should be developed for each class, and a variety of assessments should be utilized in the various classes. For example, students often had no idea how an oral presentation or a listening or speaking exercise would be graded, which caused them concern and anxiety. In addition, only two grades, a mid-term and a final examination, did not adequately assess their knowledge and understanding of the content. Also, many of the participants felt that different activities should be implemented to provide variety. In addition, students were concerned that some instructors did not have appropriate certifications to teach the courses. At this particular community college, there was no

specific requirement mandating that an instructor have an English degree or even a TESOL or ESL certification. As a result, students commented that they felt that some of the instructors lacked subject knowledge and basically only taught what was in the textbook.

Fourth, students expressed delight when learning that an instructor has travel experience, particularly when the instructor had visited their country and could relate to the differences in the cultures. While it is impossible for an instructor to visit many countries, the students noted that at least having some international travel made the instructor more approachable and sensitive to their needs.

Fifth, students also commented that some courses were too easy and did not provide a challenge. In addition, some students stated that when an instructor continually releases them from class early, they felt they were not getting their money's worth of instruction and began to question the established practices and focus of the program. They felt that as English language consumers, they deserved the best programs their money could buy. This included not only qualified instructors and innovative programs but time on task within the classrooms. Starting late and finishing early were not choices they would make if given the opportunity to be heard.

Sixth, based on the comments of the participants within this research, it is important for the educational institution to evaluate and implement changes to best benefit the students. As suggested by the participants in the research, institutions may need to consider modifying their practices to reflect student needs and wants. In fact, Taylor (2008) suggested that "closing the gaps between students and institutions in

goals, persistence and completion, technology, and learning is critical to the success of both students and institutions as both seek student success” (p. 7). In fact, Taylor (2008) posits that “all instructors must be challenged to articulate rationales for the necessity of their subjects based on some real-world application. Any topic, class, or field that cannot demonstrate its utility and meaning to each student will be suspect” (p. 7). This suggests that the theories of Berry, Bandura, and Tinto be reviewed and that practices be instituted in accordance with the research that best benefits the immigrant military spouse.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study addressed the gap in the literature concerning immigrant military wives who enroll in ESL classes at a community college. While several studies have explored the traditional community college student, this was among the first to address the immigrant women who marry military men, move to the United States, and enroll in a community college ESL program.

The findings of this research necessitate the need for additional exploration into the nontraditional, immigrant, military-related spouse who enrolls in a community college for English language learning. Current research does not adequately represent this population of English language learners who arrive with divergent learning styles, dissimilar educational experiences, and differing levels of self-efficacy, nor does it adequately address the demands for linguistic and social acculturation into the receiving country and community. According to Shi (2006), by bridging the language socialization theory with intercultural communication theory, a more integrative research paradigm

develops with which to examine the experiences, external and internal forces, and personality traits that lead students to success with English language acquisition enroute toward acculturation. In fact, this immigrant group necessitates realistic and achievable educational goals (Moss, 2006) in a timely manner due to the nature of the transient military culture.

Despite the vast body of available research that guides institutional theory and policy for the traditional college student, there is a failure to directly focus on the immigrant military spouses who are provided services at the community college where this research was conducted. A review of the literature in conjunction with the findings of this study identified six recommendations for future research.

The first recommendation for further research is to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the experiences of the participants from this study who complete the ESL program and enter the workforce, the community, or move to a credit-granting academic setting. Of particular interest might be an analysis of their level of acculturation before and after they undergo immersion into the society of the United States.

As discussed in the literature, learning involves the social element of interacting with others as identified in Bandura's Social Learning Theory. As a result, learning communities offer opportunities for identification with a model similar to the observer, the occasion to collaborate, the stimulation of new behaviors, and the development of support groups. Implementing cohorts for beginning ESL students and monitoring their effectiveness would be a second recommendation.

Although most institutions provide statistics regarding retention, the data does not include specific information about the attrition of ESL students who are immigrant military wives who stop out or drop out of the program. The third recommendation is to capture attrition data to determine the social and academic factors that lead to the abandonment of a person's personal learning goals.

To achieve success within the educational institution, students must feel motivated to persist. This includes not only their educational needs but their personal lives. Tinto (1987) suggested that institutions reshape their programs to provide students with connections to faculty, staff, support personnel, and other students who may offer encouragement and rich learning experiences. Because support programs, as documented within the literature, positively impact retention, a fourth recommendation is to collect data from students who have participated in formal or informal support programs and compare or contrast with those who did not utilize any support programs.

The opportunity for students to participate in designing practical objectives, lessons, and assessments encourage the application of real-world decision-making (Jukes & MacDonald, 2007) with ownership to reach their educational objectives. A fifth recommendation involves contrasting a study of teacher-to-student collaboration with the students who have no ownership in their learning.

An additional recommendation involves monitoring the participation rate of immigrant military wives who enroll in community educational institutions as a result of a referral by a military program. The data would determine if the establishment of a

support link aided the immigrant wives with sociocultural familiarization, English language acquisition, and subsequent movement into the workforce.

Conclusion

This study was reported in five chapters. In Chapter I, I presented an overview of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the questions that guided the research. In Chapter II, I reviewed the educational literature involving the perceptions of military immigrant spouses attending a public community college, specifically relating to their positive and negative experiences within the ESL classrooms and their endeavors toward learning the English language and moving toward acculturation into the society of the United States. I also reviewed three bodies of literature: Acculturation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Retention Theory. Berry's Acculturation Theory explained how an immigrant is able to "manage daily life in the new cultural context" (Berry, 2002, p. 32) while maintaining one's cultural identity. Bandura's Social Learning Theory has been considered one of the most influential theories of learning and development (Cherry, 2009) and included the social element of learning from others and a person's belief that she has the ability to succeed in varied situations. Bandura's self-efficacy has become an umbrella term for how women learn, what role social persuasion and support play in encouraging their behavior, and the ways women regulate their own behaviors. Tinto, on the other hand, developed the Student Integration Model (SIM) that offered a longitudinal look at factors that influence a student to drop out of school. His model offered a look into the social and academic aspects of the university setting that, he felt, influenced a person's decision to drop out, stop out, or remain enrolled.

In Chapter III, I described the methodological framework used in this study. In addition, I included a description of the study population, the site, data collection methods, and the process of data analysis. In Chapter IV, I presented the findings of the research, and in Chapter V, I included a discussion of the findings as well as conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Increased immigration and military marriages to foreign nationals have changed the face of the community and the military. Immigrant military spouses continue to face significant challenges when acculturating into the receiving community. Whether they face academic concerns, employment issues, or adaptation to the military way of life, these women begin the transition experience through community facilities, churches, employment, military programs, and local educational institutions to acquire the characteristics of culture within the United States.

The United States has become the beacon of opportunity (Anderson, 2008; Merage Foundation, 2007) for English language learning, improved work skills, and the building of new relationships within the community and local educational institutions. For military spouses from around the world, the United States offers the opportunity for the immigrant woman to transform into a bicultural person, or as Young, one of the participants, stated, from “the mud to a princess.”

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APPENDIX A

EMPIRICAL, ARTIFACT STUDIES

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
Abdifar (2007)	To examine whether or not gender makes a difference in student perceptions with using technology and preferences for teaching styles	445 undergraduate students medium-size Midwestern public university 194 males 251 females average age = 19 more than half were freshmen students	quantitative quasi-experimental design part 1 survey: demographic characteristics part 2 survey: student opinions about using technology both from teacher and student viewpoint	Male students tended to have a more positive perception of using technology in the classroom. Specific findings indicated that technological skills are valued status characteristics that do influence student expectations and perceptions.	Depending on the technological background of female ESL immigrant students, how many of them will be able to use the technology as well as communicate through it? Would online courses be helpful in accommodating them? Or would online courses prove to be more detrimental than helpful to their acculturation goals?
(Bandura)					
Abdullah and Eng (2006)	To examine the attitudes of Malaysian ESL learners towards learning English as relates to their sense of ethnic and national identity	200 undergraduates & 131 secondary school students from different ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese, & Indian) language proficiency low to high intermediate	quantitative 22 item questionnaire; 5 point Likert scale correlation tests	Majority of Malaysian ESL students exhibited a positive attitude towards learning English; recognize the functional importance of English as a tool for individual and national development and progress	These participants live in their home countries and are learning the English language for occupational purposes unlike the immigrant military spouse who lives in a foreign culture and must learn the language to acculturate.
(Berry)					
Amer and Hovey (2007)	To examine socio-demographic differences in acculturation patterns among early immigrant & second-generation Arab Americans as relates to mental health issues	120 participants 83.3% were second generation; 16.7% immigrated to the USA at age five or below; age range 18 - 46	quantitative; pre-existing data set Internet-based instruments *Arab Ethnic Identity Measure questionnaire *Arab Acculturation Scale *Arab Acculturative Strategy Scale *Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic	Unique acculturation patterns exist for Christian and Muslim sub-groups Mental health problems increase due to the need to negotiate differences	The participants were second generation or immigrated to the USA with their families. Immigrant military spouses make the conscious decision to leave their home countries to take up the residence of their spouse.

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
(Berry)			Scale *SAFE Acculturation Stress Scale *Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale non-random convenience sampling	between American and Arab cultures and role responsibilities	
Bell and Akroyd (2006)	To examine “the effect of self-regulated learning environments while holding constant the effect of computer self-efficacy, reason for taking an online course, and prior college academic achievement” (p. 1)	201 undergraduate students southeastern USA university four class levels with juniors and seniors accounting for about 64.7%	quantitative cross-sectional predictive study web-based questionnaire	Findings indicated that “the best predictors of learning achievement in undergraduate asynchronous online courses were prior college academic achievement, expectancy for learning, and the interaction term based on the cross product of prior academic achievement and expectancy” (p. 6-7)	Many schools have already gone to online courses while many others are still pondering that course. With that in mind, how will the immigrant military spouses fare in an online environment in a foreign country? How would the online environment help or hinder their acculturation processes? Despite the convenience factor, would ESL students be able to handle the responsibilities of online learning due to the requirement of more learner control and self-direction?
(Bandura)					
Chizzo (2002)	To further examine the relationship between social and psychological factors in second language acquisition.	To study the effects of acculturation for 11 th grade male students from the Islamic Saudi Academy in Virginia.	Two week study using Schumann’s Acculturation Model as a guide. Used journals.	Language shock, cultural shock, motivation, and ego play an important role in determining the success of language acquisition and pidginization.	Social and psychological factors differ from individual to individual. Dominant language is Arabic in the school although students have the ability to speak English fluently. Although a particular student states he

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
(Bandura)					wants to speak English more, he chooses to revert to Arabic which doesn't assist in his language development. This study is applicable because it deals with immigrants and language acquisition.
Fike and Fike (2008) (Tinto)	To examine predictors of student retention in the community college in online courses & developmental programs	Texas public urban community college 4 years of data 9,200 students	quantitative retrospective study demographic data	A significant relationship exists between course load & student persistence	Subjects were not specifically immigrants or military spouses. Research dealt primarily with developmental programs.
Hidalgo and Bankston (2008) (Berry)	To review the role of marriage of military brides to an American and the adaptation of Vietnamese to American society from the perspective of immigrant. Since 1965, marriage to Americans has been "one of the primary paths for migration to the United States" (p. 167)	5% PUMS sample from the larger U.S. Census IPUMS project during the years 1980, 1990, and 2000.	quantitative study using published data by U.S. Census Bureau	U.S. military involvement in Vietnam contributed to exogamy, the final stage of immigrant incorporation into a host country.	The authors state that this phenomenon "might be best investigated through interviews and other ethnographic techniques." (p. 181)
Johnson (2006) (Bandura)	To gain an understanding of experiences military wives face during husband deployments to war zones	6 military wives whose husbands were deployed to Iraq	qualitative phenomenological approach structured interviews	Communication, reintegration and self-esteem issues impacted the wives during deployments.	Although this research dealt with military wives, the women interviewed were not foreign-born spouses and did not exhibit English language deficiencies.
Jones and Trickett (2005)	To approach "cultural brokering from a	225 adolescent-mother pairs from former Soviet Union	Language, Identity & Behavioral Acculturation Scale	Russian adolescents engage in	The difference that exists between immigrant military

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
(Berry)	life domains perspective and assessed acculturation as a multidimensional process with respect to both culture of origin and culture of resettlement” (p. 4)	most were first generation immigrants women were selected because in Russia women are the primary caregivers Montgomery County Public School system	50 Likert-type scale items measuring acculturation to Russian and American cultures independently	cultural brokering for their parents. It was suggested that “the adolescent culture broker role is primarily driven by the acculturation processes of parents, not to the abilities of the children.” (p. 17) Data indicates that negative results occur in the children: emotional stress, friendship problems, family disagreements, and feelings of alienation from peers at school	spouses and children of immigrants is evident in that while in ESL classes the military immigrant spouse must personally take care of all aspects. Parents of culturally brokering children rely on others to assist them with their language obligations.
Kim and Yang (2004) (Berry)	To examine the lived experiences of Korean women married to American military men	7 or 8 cell groups were established for church members to meet to discuss religious topics. Each cell group had approximately 5 to 7 people. No exact number of participants was mentioned.	ethnographic fieldwork/case study in a Korean church with cell group meetings in the Midwest Based on <i>Beyond the Shadow of Camptown</i> . In-depth interviews. Compared to another researcher at another church.	These women are “haunted by the ever-present shadow of camptowns, that is, the image of the prostitute and of victim conceived collectively among American and fellow Koreans of the date” (p. 3)	“Korean military brides are relegated to occupy the status of cultural outsiders, seductive Oriental women, low class, depraved women, and victims. At the individual level and in everyday life, they have experienced indignities and humiliations due to their positioning in social hierarchies.” (p. 17).
Rausch and Hamilton (2006)	To answer two general research questions: 1. What factors contribute to early attrition at the university level? 2. What impact does this short-lived university experience have on the students who have left?	20 students 2 sites – one large university, the other a small college in Midwestern USA ages 18 - 19	qualitative grounded theory interviews ACT scores high school and college grade point averages collected	Attrition causes: +lack of preparation +school choice based on someone else’s suggestion +unmet expectations about university life +inadequate institutional information	Although many of the reasons for attrition could be transferred to the immigrant military spouse situation, the study population was early adult and made no mention of marital status. There was no mention made of immigrants involved in the study nor was there any mention of

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
(Tinto)				about enrollment, orientation, living areas +inability to persist +difficulties with socialization and adjustment +outside activities competed for time and attention +low self-efficacy +financial difficulties	language capabilities.
Rossiter (2003)	To examine the effects of affective strategy instruction on measures of second language proficiency & self-efficacy	31 adult ESL full-time students in Canada	quantitative Communicative Orientation of *Language Teaching Observation Scheme to observe students & teachers *self-efficacy scales *usefulness of strategy instruction scales	Programs should focus on second language learning as well as social-emotional student growth	Program consisted of full-time students who spent 25 hours a week with the same teacher & the same peers
(Bandura)					
Smith (2002)	To examine students' perceptions of the impact of an academic advisor utilizing developmental or prescriptive advising through students' personal lens and experiences	34 first-year traditional aged students who lived on campus during their first 2 semesters in college	qualitative pilot study then focus groups facilitated by student group leaders 45 to 60 minute recorded discussions	Empirical evidence suggests that first-year students prefer prescriptive advising (where the advisor is the oracle of knowledge about requirements, logistics, and provides advice) rather than developmental due to the uncertainties students feel when beginning their educational programs.	This study relates to the immigrant military spouse because she is a student in an unknown educational environment in a new country. She has questions and needs advising. What is imperative is that the advisor be sensitive to the immigrant and be able to work through language issues.
(Tinto)					
Stevens and Switzer (2006)	To examine the differences in motivational levels of online versus traditional course students by looking at	54 total students – (44 female, 10 male; 52 Caucasian & 2 other); equal amounts from online & face-to-face small Midwestern	quantitative *Scale of Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom	Student attitudes and feelings about self-efficacy toward technology did not show differences.	Time constraints become challenges for immigrant military spouses who must honor the spouse's military commitment before

Study	Purpose	Subjects	Method	Findings	Analysis of Study
(Bandura)	motivational orientation self-efficacy, and attitudes.	university required psychology course average age of online students = 30 average of face-to-face students = 27	*Self-Efficacy for computer Technologies instrument *Attitudes Toward Computer Technologies instrument questionnaire	Online students did demonstrate a higher level of interest while face-to-face preferred teacher approval. Online students also reported more intrinsic motivational factors and preferred independent course work compared to the students in the classrooms.	personal goals. Online courses could provide a lifeline to those who find travel to campus difficult; however, the language may prove challenging for the higher level ESL classes which require a more personal instructional method.
Temple (2002)	To examine "how English-speaking researchers carry out research with people who either do not speak English or do not use it as their preferred language" (p. 844) An attempt to make services more culturally sensitive.	Mental health project northern town in England 30 Asian clients 20 users of new service languages spoken include: Punjabi Urdu Bengali Gujerati	Qualitative Purposive sampling 1 representative from each profession in the team conducted interviews	Cross-language research and interpretation issues between subjects and translators may influence the communication process. A difference may occur between the written translations and the oral research accounts.	Since I will be working with immigrants, it's important to remember to consider whether the language used during research adequately describes the meaning intended. Temple (2002) states that because a person speaks a language, that doesn't suggest representation of a culture.
Tinto (1997)	To examine how participation in a collaborative learning program influenced students' learning experiences To determine how those learning experiences fit in with the broader experiences of first-year students	Seattle Community College 287 students for the final panel first-year students in Coordinated Studies Program and traditional curriculum	multi – method study but the focus is on the qualitative side survey – longitudinal panel case study questionnaires participant observation interviews document reviews informal conversations telephone interviews	The experience of the classroom shapes not only student learning but persistence as well. Building classrooms as communities increases student retention and shapes student persistence.	Building cohorts for immigrant students would allow students to share the curriculum and learn together. By building supportive peer groups, sharing in the learning, and gaining a voice in constructing knowledge brings empowerment and a sense of belonging. Although the study did not indicate any reference to immigrant students or immigrant military wives, the results are applicable to this group.

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

I have been informed about the research titled *Acculturation and Transformation among Female Immigrant Military Spouses in an ESL Learning Program at a Community College* which is being conducted by Pat Darnell, Adult Education Department, (254) 698-3691, under the direction of Dr. Mary Alfred, Texas A&M University, Adult Education Department, (979) 845-2718.

I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary, and I can withdraw my consent at any time. The following points have been explained to me:

- 1) The reason for the research is to focus on the essence of the acculturation experiences of non-English speaking immigrant military spouses who are enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs on a community college campus within the United States.
- 2) The procedures are as follows:
 - a. A pilot study will be conducted to give potential participants an idea about this research and how their experiences may benefit others, and if the interview questions should be edited for clarity or content.
 - b. Pat will interview students who have volunteered to participate. Each interview will be about 90 minutes in length. There will be no specific reference to your institution, and all actual names will be kept confidential. All identifiers will be pseudonyms.
- 3) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen to your students, your staff, or your campus.
- 4) No risks are foreseen.
- 5) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Pat will tape-record interviews but will destroy the tapes after she has transcribed them and completed her research. Transcriptions will not have any name on them except for the pseudonym and will be stored in a locked drawer.
- 6) Pat will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (254) 698-3691.

Signature of Researcher Date

Signature of Administrator Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Research at Texas A&M University that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding the rights of a participant should be addressed to IRB, General Services Complex, 750 Agronomy Road, Suite 3501, TAMU 1186 (Mailstop), College Station, TX 77843-1186. Phone: (979) 458-4067, Fax: (979) 862-3176, Email: irb@tamu.edu.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Acculturation and Transformation among Female Immigrant Military Spouses in an ESL Learning Program at a Community College

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying immigrant military wives who are enrolled in an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) Program at a community college near a major military installation in the United States. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are or were married to a United States military member who is either on active duty or retired, and you are currently enrolled in at least one ESL class or have completed the ESL program.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to participate in a pilot study discussion which will last about 60 minutes and a subsequent face-to-face interview which will last between 60 to 90 minutes. Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, this study has significance for theory, policy, and practice for the community colleges who serve female, immigrant military spouses. The illumination of your information may provide insight into the development of standards of training for educators to increase retention rates and reduce attrition while building acculturation opportunities into the available programs.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University and Central Texas College being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is anonymous. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely, and only Patricia Darnell will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely, and only Patricia Darnell will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Patricia Darnell at (254) 698-3691, at darnellpat@yahoo.com.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions, and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ I do not want to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX D

PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Were you born in a country outside the United States? Yes. No.
2. If yes, in which country were you born? _____
3. Are you currently married to a U.S. serviceman on active duty? Yes. No.
4. If your husband is not on active duty, how long has he been retired or separated from military service? _____
5. What branch of service is/was your husband in? _____
6. How many years has he been in the service, or was he in the service? _____
7. How long have you been attending ESL classes at this community college? _____
8. What is your primary reason for attending these ESL classes? _____
9. How did you learn about this community college? _____
10. Would you be interested in sharing your thoughts about your experiences when moving to the United States? Yes. No.
11. Would you have time to meet for about 60 to 90 minutes on another day to answer some specific questions in private about your experiences? Yes. No.
12. Do you have friends or family members who have faced the same transition experiences as you have that you feel may be interested in this particular study? Yes. No.
13. Would you be willing to give them my name and phone number if they are interested in participating in this study? Yes. No.
14. Would you be willing to have your responses recorded? Yes. No.

15. What do you feel is your most significant characteristic that keeps you attending classes and becoming more familiar with the English language and the culture of the United States?
-

NOTE: Your information will always be kept confidential. We will use a fake name during the study to identify your experiences.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Acculturation and Transformation among Female Immigrant Military Spouses in an ESL Learning Program at a Community College

Interview Questions:

Demographics:

What is your country of birth?

What level of education did you receive in your home country?

When living in your country, did you take any formal English classes?

How long have you been in the United States?

What is your age?

External or Internal Factors:

How have external or internal factors facilitated or hindered your acculturation?

Were you employed prior to moving to the United States? If yes, describe your job(s).

Is this your first semester at this community college?

If this is not your first semester, how long have you been attending this community college?

What is the basic reason you enrolled in English language classes?

How and where did you meet your husband?

Describe your decision to marry an American serviceman.

Describe your adjustment to life within the United States.

What are your thoughts about your ability to handle challenges? These can be external or internal challenges.

How easy is it for you to work through challenges and bounce back from problems? Could you share an example of any challenge you have faced?

What personal characteristics help you work toward your goals?

What is your life like when your husband deploys? Have you ever had any significant difficulties?

What are your general thoughts about your life in the United States?

Do you feel you understand the laws, culture, and language? Explain your response.

What do you plan to do with the new English language skills you are learning?

Are there any specific challenges you faced when coming to your duty station in the United States?

Do you feel you have had to make external or internal changes while adjusting to the American way of life? Could you give an example?

Family:

Describe your family life in your home culture before you married your husband.

How did your family react to your decision to marry an American military man and leave your country?

Does anyone help you communicate to others within the society in situations such as with doctors, utility companies, schools, or your job, especially when your husband is or has been deployed?

Military:

What does it mean for you as an immigrant military spouse to speak a language other than English within the United States community?

Describe any positive or negative experiences with your adjustment to military life.

Has language been a specific issue for you as a military wife? Would you share an example?

Is there any specific advice you would give to another immigrant military wife who is preparing to move to the United States?

School – Community College:

Who has the responsibility to help you acculturate into the society of the United States?

What institutional factors do you think influenced your attrition or retention within this community college setting?

Describe your expectations of your ESL program when you enrolled.

What are some experiences you had within this community college? These can be positive or negative.

What suggestions would you offer the ESL staff if they were willing and able to make changes to the ESL program?

Have your ESL classes helped you become more integrated or more knowledgeable about American society?

Discuss some rewarding or unrewarding experiences you have had as a result of becoming a community college student.

What do you think is the role of an ESL program at the community college level?

Conclusion:

Other than these questions, is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences at this community college, your adjustment to life within the community of the United States, the workforce, or your affiliation with the United States military?

Thank you for volunteering to assist me with my research about immigrant military spouses and your acculturation experiences.

VITA

Patricia Darnell
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EDUCATION

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|------|---|
| 2012 | Ph.D., Adult Education
Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas |
| 1981 | M.A., Management and Supervision
Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan |
| 1979 | B.S., Business
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota |
| 1979 | B.A., English
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota |

CERTIFICATIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2008 | TESOL Teaching Certificate Course, Maselle Career College |
| 2006 | College Teaching Certificate, Texas A&M University |
| 2001 | Mid-Management Certification, Tarleton State University |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1999-Present | Instructor, GED Program, Central Texas College, Killeen, Texas |
| 1985-2008 | Secondary Teacher, Killeen Independent School District, Killeen, Texas |
| 1996-2002 | Lead Tutor, Killeen High School, Killeen, Texas |
| 1985-1991 | Instructor, University of Central Texas, Killeen, Texas |
| 1983-1985 | Instructor, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor |
| 1980-1982 | Instructor, Hawaii Pacific College, Honolulu, Hawaii |

This dissertation was typed and edited by Marilyn M. Oliva at Action Ink, Inc.